

PRICE 20 CENTS

FEBRUARY 1921

# THE BLUE BOOK

## MAGAZINE



"Rings and Things" a complete novelette by John A. Moroso;  
H. Bedford-Jones, William Harper Dean, Frederick R. Bechdolt,  
F. Morton Howard, Clarence Herbert New, Robert J. Casey,  
Edison Marshall, Lemuel L. DeBra, Gladys E. Johnson and others.



# "HANES" is nationally standard underwear—*It will make good to you!*



## Read Hanes Guarantee:

"We guarantee Hanes Underwear absolutely—every thread, stitch and button. We guarantee to return your money or give you a new garment if any seam breaks."

**EXTRA** wear, extra warmth and extra comfort are built into "Hanes" winter underwear for men just as accurate time is built into a good watch! "Hanes" is made with one idea in mind—that it be the greatest underwear value ever sold at the price!

Your own test will prove that it is—and it will also prove why our guarantee on every "Hanes" garment is so broad. We know what goes into "Hanes"—and what "Hanes" must deliver to you in satisfaction!

You can feel that thrill of contentment the moment you put on "Hanes" underwear! "Hanes" never disappoints!

"HANES" heavy winter union suits and the new silk trimmed, full combed yarn medium weight union suits (carrying the yellow Hanes label) have the non-gaping tailored collarette and elastic knit, shape holding arm and leg cuffs; buttonholes last the life of the garment; an extra gusset assures extra comfort across the thighs; the "Hanes" closed crotch stays closed; pearl buttons sewed on to stay; reinforcements strengthen every strain point.

"Hanes" heavy winter weight Shirts have the snug-setting elastic knit collarette and arm cuffs. Drawers have an extra wide, durable 3-button sateen waist band that assures comfort and service.

## Hanes Union Suits for boys

are unequalled at the price for fleecy warmth, form fitting comfort and wear-service. They are wonderful value because they give such extraordinary service!

Made in sizes 20 to 34, covering ages from 2 to 16 years. 2 to 4 year old sizes have drop seat. Four desirable colors.

See "Hanes" underwear at your dealer's. If he cannot supply you, write us at once.

**P. H. HANES KNITTING CO.**

Winston-Salem, N. C.

New York Office: 366 Broadway

*Next Summer=You'll want to wear Hanes Nainsook Union Suits!*



# This Letter Saved Me 36% on a New Typewriter

Chicago, Nov. 2, 1920.

Dear Henry:

I hear that you are down in New York to open a branch office for your firm. You'll be buying a lot of things for the office, not the least important of which will be typewriters.

And that's what I want to talk to you about—typewriters. I want to give you the benefit of an experience I had some time ago, and thereby, I hope, save you some real money.

About a year ago, I decided to buy a typewriter for home use. My first thought was to purchase one of the makes we were using in the office, which had been put in before I became buyer for the house. But when it came to digging up a hundred dollars for the machine—I just couldn't. Somehow or other, it looked like too much money to me.

Then I thought about picking up a second-hand machine, but the price was about as high, and I had no assurance of service.

I was undecided as to what to do, when, one evening at home, I ran across an Oliver Typewriter ad in a magazine. I remembered, then, having read the advertising before, and being impressed with the story.

"Why Pay \$100 for Any Typewriter"—  
"When You Can Buy a New Oliver for \$64?"

read the ad—then it went on to explain how The Oliver Typewriter Company had cut the price by selling direct and eliminating costly selling methods. It was clear to me, as an experienced buyer, how they could well afford to lop off \$36 of the \$100 by their new economical selling plan.

The ad brought out the fact, too, that I didn't have to pay the \$64 in a lump sum. I could settle at the easy rate of \$4 a month. Naturally, that appealed to me; for it was as easy as rental terms.

But the thing that decided me was their free trial offer. Without my sending or depositing a penny, they would ship me an Oliver for five days' free trial. I could use the typewriter for five days, just as if it were my own, and if I wasn't satisfied, all I had to do was to ship it back at the Oliver Company's expense. Well, I mailed in the coupon and got an Oliver for free trial. To make a short story shorter, I was more than pleased with the Oliver. I fully agreed with the Oliver Typewriter Company, that if any typewriter was worth \$100, it was this splendid Oliver.

Well, later, when we found it necessary to replace some of the typewriters at the office, you may be sure I put in Oliver's, saving the company a nice \$36 on each. At first the girls were reluctant about changing machines, but after a week or two with the Oliver, they wouldn't have any other.

Naturally, now we are all Oliver enthusiasts—that's why I write this letter to you.

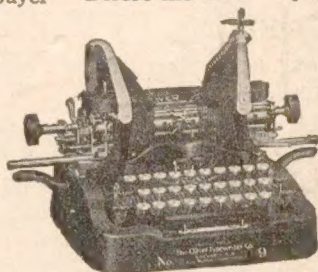
You just give the Oliver a trial and you'll be more than willing to buy me a good dinner when I arrive in New York next month.  
Yours, J. B.

That is the letter that saved me \$36 on each of my typewriters. I not only equipped the office with the Oliver, but, like my friend, I also bought one for home use. Yes, I am more than willing to buy my friend a good dinner for his valuable advice.

Any reader may order an Oliver direct from this ad by mailing the coupon. No money in advance. No deposit. No obligation to buy. Return or keep the Oliver, as you decide, after five days' free trial. If you decide to keep the typewriter, you may take a year and a half to pay at the easy rate of \$4 a month. Mail the coupon today—NOW.

Avoid disappointment—Order now to secure immediate delivery.

Was  
\$100  
Before the War



Now  
\$64

Canadian Price, \$82

The **OLIVER**  
Typewriter Company

1152 Oliver Typewriter Bldg.  
Chicago, Ill.

Save  
\$36

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER CO.  
1152 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days' free inspection. If I keep it, I will pay \$64 at the rate of \$4 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is.....  
This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book, "The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City.....State.....

Occupation or Business.....

BB7-09

**A Finer Typewriter at a Fair Price**  
**Over 900,000 Sold**



# THE BLUE BOOK

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, Editor

Copyrighted, 1921, by The Story-Press Corporation.  
Copyrighted, 1921, by The Story-Press Corporation, in Great Britain and the Colonies.

**COVER DESIGN:** Painted by Ralph Pallen Coleman to illustrate "Rings and Things."

## *A Complete Novelette*

### **"Rings and Things" By John A. Moroso 166**

A captivating novelette of mystery, romance and adventure by the man who wrote the famous Bonehead Tierney stories.

## *Thirteen Unusual Short Stories*

### **Higher Education Does Pay By William Harper Dean 25**

A joyous tale of that dark comedian Potluck Hewitt, and of his most surprising adventures.

### **Tuan Franks' Holiday By H. Bedford-Jones 33**

This is a dramatic episode in the East Indies such as the author of "The Brazen Peacock," "The Black Sheep" and many other memorable stories writes so well.

### **One Too Many Jones By Frederick R. Bechdolt 40**

The man who wrote "Lighthouse Tom" and "Sindbad of Oakland Creek" is at his best in this fine story of the old West.

### **Entered in Red By Robert J. Casey 48**

This new exploit of Fancy Dan is even more tensely exciting than his previous adventures in gun-play.

### **A Lesson in Salesmanship By F. Morton Howard 58**

The crew of the good ship *Jane Gladys* undertake a new bit of amiable rascality: you'll find them most diverting.

### **The Law and the Man By Lemuel L. De Bra 67**

Here Mr. De Bra—you will at once recall his fine "The Other Key" "A Thunderin' Thriller" and "Crooks is Crooks"—writes of a really thrilling adventure of the Customs service.

---

THE STORY-PRESS CORPORATION, Publisher, 36 South State Street, Chicago

LOUIS ECKSTEIN  
President

CHARLES M. RICHTER  
Vice-President and General Manager

RALPH K. STRASSMAN  
Vice-President and Advertising Director

---

Office of the Advertising Director, 33 West Forty-second Street, New York

R. M. PURVES, New England Representative, 80 Boylston St., Boston. LONDON OFFICES, 6 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C.  
Entered as second-class matter July 24, 1906, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.



# MAGAZINE

February  
1921

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

HEADINGS: Drawn by QUIN HALL

## **Tower of Jewels** By Paul Fitzgerald 76

The blithe tale of two negro pugs and their memorable battle—by a new writer you will be glad to meet again in the Blue Book.

## **The Poisoned Pen** By Leonard D. Hollister 84

A perplexing mystery confronted the Post Office inspectors; you'll enjoy following them to its solution.

## **The Men of Grimaldi** By Prosper Buranelli 91

Twenty-five thousand years ago it happened—but none the less it's deeply interesting now: a truly different story.

## **Including Good Will** By Charles Wesley Sanders 99

A story of some very real and human people, by the author of "The Fiery Mills of Men."

## **Free Lances in Diplomacy** By Clarence Herbert New 136

"The Dreams of Asia" find the Free Lances taking cards in the deep game of Oriental intrigue.

## **Luck** By Alexander Hull 149

You will find this intensely human story, with its underlying theme, especially worth reading.

## **Oolong, Mixed** By Mary Weik 157

It all happened in China—happened with speed and suddenness. Don't miss this one.

### *Two Notable Serials*

## **Wind Along the Waste** By Gladys E. Johnson 1

A fascinating novel; its scene is a lonely part of the California coast; its plot is replete with thrills and action.

## **The Strength of the Pines** By Edison Marshall 106

This fine novel of the Oregon wilderness is sure to please you. We've seldom printed a more engaging story.

**TERMS:** \$2.00 a year in advance; 20 cents a number. Foreign postage \$1.00 additional except on subscriptions for soldiers overseas on which there is no extra postage charge, the price for the subscription being the same as domestic subscriptions, viz. \$2.00 per year. Canadian postage 50c. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publisher. Remittances must be made by Post-office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter, or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check or draft, because of exchange charges against the latter.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** Do not subscribe to THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through an agent unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands, or on trains, a notification to the Publisher will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.



# The joy of succeeding while you are still young

**T**WO men work equally hard, and both succeed. But, to one man, position and independence come at thirty-five; to the other, not until sixty.

Success is sweet, whenever it comes; but, at sixty, the capacity for enjoyment is less keen. The travel that seems so alluring at thirty-five, has lost a little of its charm; the distance to the end of the road of life is shorter, and many a man finds fortune in his hands so late that there is time only to arrange to pass it on to someone else.

Happy is the man who finds a way to save, somehow, the intervening years; there is joy in succeeding while you still are young. The reason why success comes so late for most men is that there is so much to learn.

Only a man who knows all the different departments of business is qualified to reach the higher positions, or to enter business for himself. And the learning of all departments from practical experience in each, is a matter of many years.

## Learning how to save the wasted years

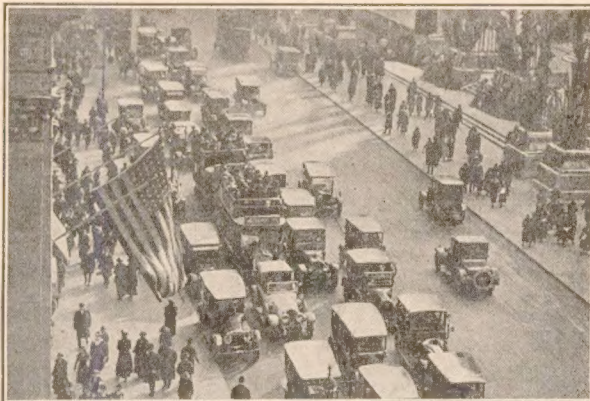
**I**S there no way to shorten this process? Must every man's life have so many wasted years? Thousands of able men have determined to eliminate those wasted years from their lives; many have found the answer in the Alexander Hamilton Institute's Modern Business Course and Service.

For years, the Alexander Hamilton Institute has specialized in the single task of training men

for the higher executive positions in business.

Into its Course have been built the experience and the methods which have made many of the business leaders most successful.

More than 20,000 presidents of corporations are numbered among its successful subscribers. "In the past eight years," one man wrote recently, "my income has increased 750%. The Course has been the foundation of my business training."



*In New York City: Fifth Avenue at 5 o'clock, filled with automobiles carrying successful men from their offices to their homes. An observer, watching the cars pass, cannot fail to be impressed with the number of their occupants who are young or middle-aged men. It is pre-eminently the day of success in youth.*

Its subscribers appropriate the knowledge of other men, and profit by other men's mistakes. They learn, in months, what ordinarily takes years.

## The experience of the most successful made available for all

**B**USINESS authority of the highest type is represented on the Institute's Advisory Council:

Frank A. Vanderlip, the financier; General Coleman duPont, the well-known business executive; John Hays Hammond, the eminent engineer; Jeremiah W. Jenks, the statistician and economist; and Joseph French Johnson, Dean of the New York University School of Commerce.

## "My income has increased 750 per cent"

**H**UNDREDS of successful executives have testified that the Alexander Hamilton Institute has been a tremendous factor in their success.

Would you like to save the wasted years? Would you know the joy of rapid, instead of moderate, progress—the joy of succeeding while you still are young? If so, this is the call of opportunity to you; a moment's decision is all you need.

Any man who is sincerely interested in his future, will clip the coupon at the bottom of this page. It is placed there for a purpose—to separate from the mass of drifters the few men who are asking themselves: "Where am I going to be ten years from now?"

## "Forging Ahead in Business"

**T**HE book which the coupon will bring, is "Forging Ahead in Business," a 116-page book that tells how the Institute has helped so many other men to find success while they were still young. It is a valuable book, but it is sent without obligation; send for your copy now.

## Alexander Hamilton Institute

17 Astor Place New York City

Send me "Forging Ahead in Business," which I may keep without obligation.



Name.....

Print here

Business Address.....

Business Position.....

Canadian address, C. P. R. Bldg., Toronto; Australian address, 8a Castlereagh St., Sydney.

Copyright 1921, Alexander Hamilton Institute.

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.



February  
1921

THE  
BLUE BOOK  
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXXII  
No. 4

# Wind Along the Waste



A Three-part  
Novel

By  
Gladys E. Johnson

## CHAPTER I AT DUNE HOUSE

**Y**OU can see for yourself that there's nothing to get scared of. Lonely? Course it's lonely; so's every country house, and I suppose some would find sand dunes more so than the straight country; but if you have a brain in your head,—and I think you have; that's why I engaged you,—you aren't going to work up a fit of hysterics and think every shadow's a ghost and it's going to bite you!"

Eliza Haldayne finished this tirade with a rather belligerent stare, and I quickly murmured something about "hoping not."

Her quick black eyes galloped about the room. "I think everything you'll need's here. The children's room is next to yours. You'll see 'em in the morning. Hoang brought your baggage up, I see!"—with a quick glance at my suitcases placed at the foot of the bed. "Don't open your windows; night air's bad. Breakfast's at eight."

Firing these directions jerkily, as one

who is unaccustomed to or impatient of wasting much conversation, she moved toward the door, the light from the hanging kerosene lamp wickedly painting her bobbing caricature on the walls as she did so.

At the doorway she paused a moment and looked back at my motionless figure bathed in the lamplight. It might have been a trick of the shadows, or perhaps only my fancy, but for a brief instant she seemed about to speak, indecision battling with some other emotion which I could not analyze. Whatever the impulse, it was quickly over. Her middle-aged features slipped back into their usual stern mask, and with a curt "good night," she left me.

For a moment I stood hesitating in the center of the big high-ceiled room, chilled more than reassured by the advice I had just received. The lamp cast a cone of yellow light, an enormous splash of color in the very center of the room. Beyond its radius the shadows gathered ominously, seeming only to await some signal to rush silently upon me. Before the fancy my usual self-possession fled, leaving me feeling very frail and defenseless.

Copyrighted, 1921, by The Story-Press Corporation. All rights reserved.



After all, Reason began hysterically, what did I know about this woman who had engaged me as governess? Even the country was strange to me. The automobile which had brought me from the city had traveled all day to reach this lonely house on the California coast. My sense of direction had given up in despair long ago. I did not know how far we were from San Francisco; I did not know if there was another dwelling within miles.

The thought brought its own panic. I flew silently to the door to lock it. I could see no key, and impatiently I grasped the knob to see if it might not be on the outside. My chilled fingers became aware of an indisputable fact. The knob was held firmly by another hand out there in the hall.

**F**OR the moment that unexpected resistance left me too surprised to cry out. I felt my fingers relax; the great room with its splashes of lamplight swam wildly. The faded velvet curtains before the window were ominously bulky. . . .

The vertigo passed. A hot anger came in its wake, and I twisted the knob viciously. This time it gave easily, but the door remained closed: it was locked from without. In stubborn terror I entertained the decision of shaking the knob frenziedly and screaming until some one should come to release me. Even as the thought presented itself, the futility of it became apparent.

I walked slowly back to the friendly cone of light, my eyes furtively taking in every detail of the apartment. The chairs, ugly moderations of Windsors, stupidly carved and stuffily upholstered, cast bow-legged shadows on the white plaster walls. The high ceiling was lost in the dusk above; an old-fashioned black walnut wardrobe towering upward in the gloom offered frightful suggestions. I deliberately walked the length of the room and boldly flung it open, feeling the roots of my hair tingle as I did so. Its half-doors banged back against the wall, but it was reassuringly empty.

Leaving it gaping, I turned next to those suggestively bulky window-hangings. My new employer's warning about opening the windows now sprung to my mind endowed with new coloring. Advancing as though I intended to return to the neglected suitcases at the end of the bed, I suddenly wheeled and jerked aside the

heavy velvet hangings. Nothing but closed wooden shutters met my wide eyes. These I unbolted, then raised the long, narrow windows.

A rush of fog came to my face, and the lamplight fell on a heavy wire mesh completely covering the open area, as effectually as iron bars. No one could get into the room through the windows; that was certain. It should have been reassuring, but —neither could anyone get out.

I closed and bolted the shutters again, struggling hard for self-possession. The windows would have been of no aid, anyway; I had climbed a long flight of stairs to this second-story room. The ground probably lay thirty feet below. I returned to the lamp's circle and gingerly seated myself on the edge of the old-fashioned wooden bed that had been rendered creaking and rheumatic by long years of ocean dampness.

The vague doubts I had unconsciously entertained all day were now alive three-fold and screaming for recognition. My mind flew back over my brief acquaintance with Eliza Haldayne, searching for some inkling why she should lock up the governess she had just engaged for her sister's children. A more matter-of-fact, unromantic figure than Miss Haldayne it would have been hard to imagine.

I had literally fallen into this position. Cramming four years' college work into three, and this coupled with the double task of earning a livelihood at the same time, had brought a physical collapse hand in hand with my degree of A. B. My rigidly gathered little capital melted with appalling rapidity. Once on my feet again, I looked for secretarial work, thanking the lucky star which had included a brief business course of stenography in my curriculum. It was not easy to find. Discouraged by a day's unsuccessful tramping of wet streets, I had hesitated before a small employment agency on a side street.

"One more," my will power coaxed my tired body. "Just this one; then you can go home to a nice mustard footbath." It was a forlorn hope. The place dealt exclusively in domestic servants.

I left there quickly, and because of the tired tears in my eyes and a run-over heel, I was careless in stepping to the wet pavement. I was vastly astonished to find myself on all fours, directly before a tall, big-framed woman who was heading for the entrance.



Even as she helped me to my feet, her quick black eyes ran over me, missing no detail of my shabby, would-be-efficient attire, now muddy and wet. She began without preliminaries.

"You just came out of that place. Are you looking for a position?"

Too tired to resent her tone, I answered obediently: "Yes. But they haven't anything for me. I'm a stenographer."

"Well, I don't suppose it would kill you to do something else. You're about twenty-three, I guess. You look like you had sense. What's your name?"

At another time this cross-examination would have roused either my indignation or my sense of humor. Now I told her, meekly enough.

"Well, look here, Ann Belmont," she persisted. "I'm looking for a nurse-girl—a governess, if you like the term better, though I don't care if you can't teach so long as you have gumption. It's to take care of two children. Just because the place is in the country, the average fool woman thinks it's lonesome. I'll pay you twenty a week besides your board; that's better than you're liable to get with your stenography. You're young and you look as if you had sense. Besides, you're not pretty—I can't stand a pretty fool. Will you come?"

It was rather sudden, and the snob which is in all of us rose within me at what it was pleased to regard as a "menial" position. Eliza Haldayne met every objection and overrode it. Wet feet and the munificent salary backed her up. I was engaged.

**E**ARLY the next morning my new employer drove around to my side-street hotel, the only occupant of a great clumsy machine whose height and outside gearshift and horn joined its dilapidated upholstery to proclaim its ancient vintage.

Into this relic I piled my two suitcases, while Eliza Haldayne threaded her way through the work-tide of traffic which filled the streets. She chose the San Bruno road out of the city, a thoroughfare leading through the Potrero, San Francisco's poorest quarter. A cold, raw fog had rolled in from the ocean, blurring the outlines of dismal little cottages standing in the midst of their goat-pastures. The great tanneries and soap-factories loomed indefinite bulks in the grayness. The shabby neighborhood was one with the shabby car roll-

ing through it, and I was swept along on a great wave of depression. In my summer-weight suit I shivered. For the first time I experienced a sense of uneasiness, foreboding almost, gnawing in the back of my mind.

Yet even now, sitting here huddled at the foot of the great shadowy bed, I had to admit that there was nothing in Eliza Haldayne's appearance to excite alarm. She was only a large-framed, rather commonplace woman in an ugly great-coat, a man's cap pulled down over her one beauty, a thick wad of coarse, slightly wavy gray hair. A typical New England spinster she seemed, with a veneer of masculinity added through contact with this Western land. She had been rather silent on the journey down the peninsula, but I was not loquacious at the best of times, and we got on well together. When we made a stop beside the dusty highway at noon, and gnawed upon some thick and rather stale cheese sandwiches my employer had rooted out from the car's side pocket, I gleaned scant information of my future. I was to have two charges, Miss Haldayne volunteered between vigorous chews, a girl and a boy, children of a dead younger sister. Who else formed the family she did not vouchsafe, and I did not ask. My reason was pouncing upon incongruities in the situation and, rather panic-stricken, forcing them upon me. The appearance of my employer, the disgraceful old car, this very luncheon of stale bread and scraps of cheese, when roadside cafés beckoned on all hands—it was incompatible with the really princely salary I was to receive for doubtful ability. Was the lonely location of the place the only reason that she had to bait it with such tempting wages?

All through the long warm day the car had limped south down the highway. In the late afternoon the presence of fog once more betrayed the ocean to be not far off. We had turned from the main road long ago and were running between broad, flat fields that soon alternated with sandy patches.

Now once more memory prodded me to fearful alertness. There had been one incident, which at the time I had put down to mere eccentricity, but which now, viewed in the light of that locked door, took on new meaning: Where the asphalt had ceased and the drifted sand piled in little hummocks on the road, the woman



had stopped the car, and climbing capably over the back of the front seat as a man might, she began to rummage in the tonneau—finally emerging with rusty side curtains.

Involuntarily I had spoken my amazement. "Why, Miss Haldayne, the wind has died down. I was thinking how nice and mild it was."

Even through the thickening dusk I had seen Eliza Haldayne's lips tighten as though displeased. "I know what I'm about," she retorted taciturnly. "I guess I know this country better than you do. Here, catch a hold that corner."

The car had been completely covered when she had finished, even to the point of inclosing the driver's seat until its occupants could not possibly be recognized by one looking in from the road. In the fog and gathering dusk this seemed to me sheerest insanity, but there was a determination in the woman's manner which kept my opinions unspoken. She was working with desperate haste as though spurred on by the darkness. Subconsciously my nerves responded. I found myself glancing over my shoulder, though the flat twilight country appeared deserted.

WHEN Eliza Haldayne climbed back again and released the brake, it had been to urge the old rattletrap to the zenith of its speed. At the time I had thought her only anxious to arrive home before the road was totally dark, and I blamed my own too vivid imagination.

The car was running, then, between sand dunes and fields mixed—links, my Scotch ancestors would have called them. A thick white fog was bearing down from above; a straggling growth of lichens kept the sand from drifting, and in some instances had thrown suckers across the road, showing that it was but little traveled. A distant white ocean came to view through drifting fog on the curves, but it did not hold my eyes. Despite my common sense, I watched the road unreel in numb watchfulness, shrinking involuntarily when the wheels crunched over the lichens. Though it grew quite dark, Miss Haldayne did not stop to light the lamps. We rattled along in the growing blackness, the woman beside me driving as though she possessed the eyes of a cat.

Not until we were almost upon it, did I see the house. Against the background of lofty sand dunes its black bulk lost pro-

portion, but no one sensed its height. No hospitable light shone from the windows; they might have been boarded up. In the darkness I stumbled over shallow wooden steps leading to a front veranda. There was no way of seeing the building's surroundings; the fog lay like wet, thick cotton on everything, blotting out the stars. I was forced to fight down a silly fit of panic—panic of which I was a trifle ashamed when the front door suddenly opened, and a flare of lamplight fell on our faces.

Now, my nerves still twitching with that locked door, I remembered that Eliza Haldayne had shoved me ahead of her into the hall with almost rude haste, and that her grim features had relaxed only when the door was safely bolted behind us.

Here the first peculiarity of the old house had been forced upon me. An amazing number of lamps, kerosene lamps of all sizes and descriptions, blazed wherever one turned. Far down the long hall we faced they winked back at me, twinkling from what seemed to be myriads of little wooden shelves jutting out of the walls to hold them. Not a dark corner existed anywhere; even the stairs leading to the second floor were lighted—a prodigal waste of oil, and incongruous, when those stale cheese sandwiches were recalled. The rooms branching on either side of the hall weltered in lamplight, but heavy wooden shutters and thick hangings of faded velvet drawn over the windows had kept the friendly gleam from penetrating to us outside.

A silent Chinese servant grasped my suitcases and disappeared with them up a crooked flight of stairs; yet when scarcely a minute later we entered the chilly, high-ceiled dining-room, it was to find him placidly waiting on the table. Hoang, I was to discover, possessed the rather startling faculty of appearing to be in two places at once.

There had been nothing at this time to rouse the wild speculations I now entertained. Eliza Haldayne continued her silence, but it had lost its tense quality now, and was merely the silence of preoccupation. The others, she informed me briefly, while she chewed some cold meat, had gone to bed; they kept early hours at Dune House. Who the others might be I was left to speculate in silence. Her preoccupation lasted until she had preceded me up the crooked stairs and shown me this



shadowy bedroom on the second floor. Her tone, though brusque, was kind. There was nothing to warn me that I was to be locked as a prisoner in the room as soon as she had left. Turn and grope as my mind would, it could find no explanation to the mystery other than eccentricity.

I grasped at this straw of comfort eagerly. Eccentricity stops at locking doors. Nevertheless I was taking no chances. All the horror stories I had secretly read in childhood, all the disquieting tales of violence, now flocked gleefully into my quaking brain. There was, for instance, that comforting little legend of the traveler in the lonely inn who wakes in time to see the canopy of the bed descending to crush his unsuspecting form.

I rose rather hastily and looked at the bed. The old-fashioned roll top sported no canopy, but I was not waiting for it to grow one. With grim determination I tugged a great feather mattress to a far corner. If anything was to enter the room in the night and grope its way to the bed, I didn't intend to be there. My fingers shook as I loosened the laces of my shoes. That completed my toilet for the night, for after an inward debate, I decided that if I was to be murdered in my sleep I preferred to at least have the moral support of my outer clothes.

One other ray of comfort was vouchsafed me; a tall and heavy brass candlestick whose prophetic maker must have foreseen its utility as a weapon. With this in my hand and a shaking little prayer in my heart, I turned the lamp low and blew it out.

As the flame flickered down, I groped my way to my bed on the floor. The damp smell of the fog filled the room—I had opened the tall windows; but a weak watery moon was struggling to break through. Even as I huddled down in the cold billows of feathers, its thin light triumphed, and the shadow of the wire mesh grew on the floor.

I watched with wide eyes the light wax stronger. It crept up, striking the bow leg of a chair, slanting across the foot of the wooden bedstead. Up the panels of the door at the further end of the chilly room it fell, until its pale light quivered on the brass knob.

Then the roots of my hair began to tingle, and my heart was smothered. Under my eyes that knob turned, turned gently,

then came silently to rest again as though a tentative hand made sure that it was still locked. There was no sound either inside or outside the room. For what seemed an eternity of time I sat rigidly upright among the feather pillows, my eyes glued to the now motionless knob. It was the candlestick's sharp base, cutting into my palm, which finally forced my attention.

With the relaxation of the muscles the mental strain eased a little. Still too tense even to speculate, I cautiously shifted to a more restful position, and leaning back on the pillows, I fixed my watchful eyes on the door.

## CHAPTER II

### JOAN'S BLUEBEARD CHAMBER

IN the cold light of morning I flattened my face to the wire mesh covering the windows and tried to see the surroundings among which I had chosen to live. I was facing the ocean. The house stood in dreary isolation in the midst of interminable sand dunes. An unkempt garden sloped beneath the window, the steep, dried flower-beds bearing out the desolation I had sensed last night. Only a few scattered sea-pinks and some lupine shrubs with long purple spikes of flowers swaying on gray-green twisted branches put pale color in the scene. A ragged evergreen hedge, its seaward branches twisted and bare, edged the place. It was Swinburne's "Forsaken Garden":

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels

One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.

Only the wind here hovers and revels

In a round where life seems barren as death.

The fog was high. By flattening my face until the wire mesh painted its dirty counterpart on my nose, I caught glimpses of a small open bay edged by a dreary, seaweed-dotted beach. For a couple of minutes I stood flattened there, the dismalness of the scene soaking into my spirit. An impudent seagull wheeling close screamed derisively at me and turned me to hunting for my comb and brush.

The terror of the night before had worn off. Investigation this morning showed me that the door was unlocked. In spite of my terror, sleep had stolen upon me. Sometime during the night, while I lay in helpless unconsciousness, some one had stealthily unlocked the door. The thought was



unpleasant. My indignation mounted with my hair, and when I stood ready to go downstairs, I was entirely in possession of every faculty save my temper.

I removed all signs of my improvised bed on the floor, feeling a little foolish as I did so. The menace of the shadows had disappeared. The room was now nothing more than the upper bedroom of a rambling great house; the faded red curtains held no ominous bulkiness; the heavy black walnut furniture was more frankly ugly, less fearfully grotesque. A glance at the door as I stepped into the hall showed an empty lock. The key was gone.

The upper hall appeared to stretch the length of the house and to parallel the lower one I had traversed last night. At both ends it plunged down a flight of steep and crooked stairs. On this floor I lingered only long enough to glance out the window in the bend of the stairs. It gave way on a dreary vista of dun-colored sand-dunes, and like the ones in my bedroom, was entirely covered by a heavy wire mesh.

A SLIGHT sound behind me whirled me about, all nerves. The Chinese servant I had seen last night was watching me, unpleasantly close. There was something in his unsmiling scrutiny, something hostile that I sensed in his bearing, which caused an instant antagonism to leap full grown within me. I don't like people kitty-catting up behind me and said so frankly, finding relief in speech. He waited stolidly until I had finished, then informed me, "Missy Haldayne say come breakfast," and glided ahead to show the way.

After the chill of that red-hung bedroom this commonplace new scene was reassuring. In the breakfast-room Eliza Haldayne sat entrenched behind the coffee-urn, clad in a freshly starched and severe brown gingham. On her right was a dull blonde middle-aged woman who had reached the fat and sighing stage of existence. On the other side two solemn-faced thin children sat silently attacking their breakfast oatmeal. A place for me had been laid at the end of the table.

Eliza Haldayne received me with a curt but not unfriendly nod.

"G'morning. This is my sister, Drusilla Haldayne, Ann Belmont. And these are the children, Joan and Harry Statler."

It was one of Miss Haldayne's characteristics that she invariably dispensed with titles. She generally used one's two names

in conjunction and threw the handles overboard.

Miss Drusilla, as I afterwards came to call her, looked up with a flicker of interest in her large, languishing blue eyes and breathed a gusty welcome. A glance from her sister shut off her ramblings and allowed me to slip into my chair. The children were shyly curious, their pale little faces stretching out on thin necks, as sickly plants stretch toward the sun. The surprise I felt at their appearance amounted almost to shock. I had pictured sturdy young savages, brown and hardy from tumbling about the sand dunes. These youngsters had the appearance of people too much indoors.

My polite attempts at conversation met no encouragement. Meals were rather silent affairs at Dune House, I was to discover. The children ate steadily, almost fearfully, their eyes on their plates, embarrassed as children will become under too rigid control. Miss Drusilla's conversation consisted of complaints aimed at Hoang, carried on in a monotonous whining undertone, until the significance of my name caught her flickering interest.

"Belmont? I knew some people of the same name once—quite a prominent family, they were. They owned a magnificent home in San Francisco. Land, the dances and balls I went to there! But that was in other days." The bitterness of that last phrase stirred even my uninitiated brain, and a faint pity was born in my heart.

"I'm afraid I can't claim kinship with the rich Belmonts," I answered, trying to speak lightly. "I've heard of them; they were prominent in early California society."

"That's the family!" Miss Drusilla put in eagerly. Her vacant blue eyes lit up with a flare of interest. "There was a brother of the girls, a handsome young gallant; and the girls used to tease me about him—quite wild about me they said he was." She giggled insinuatingly and paused to take a bite of bread and butter.

There was something so grotesque about that mountain of pale flabby flesh recalling love-affairs that I know I stared rudely. It did not annoy Miss Drusilla. On the contrary, my too frank expression was taken for admiring interest. She nodded coyly over the bread and butter.

"That's so. They were dreadfully afraid that he would do something desperate when I refused him—quite the catch of the sea-



son he was, too. Yellow I wore the night he proposed; I always could wear yellow, and you know so many girls look sallow in it. It was made with a berth of rose point. I remember a lovely Englishman, he was a captain in the Black Watch, told me that night that I looked like a slender daffodil—"

Her ramblings abruptly ran down and jerked into silence. Eliza Haldayne had turned her prominent black eyes on her sister.

"Hoang, more coffee." Her voice boomed out, and effectually blocked conversation.

AS we rose from the table I intercepted my employer as she was following the others from the room.

"Miss Haldayne," I said, trying to keep my voice expressionless, "a curious thing happened last night. Just after you left my room I tried the door. It was locked on the outside."

The black eyes before me never wavered; nor did my own. For a brief moment we silently regarded each other. Then the woman spoke quietly. "You must be mistaken, Ann. Who would wish to lock you in your room?"

I answered as quietly. "I can't imagine what their object would be, Miss Haldayne. It mustn't happen again."

"That door sticks. That's what you mistook for being locked in. I'll have Hoang fix it today."

"Some one tried the knob last night, after I was in bed. I saw it turn in the moonlight."

We still held each other's gaze. "I hope you aren't going to develop nerves, Ann."

"I'm not afraid." I was inwardly applauding my noncommittal tone. Except for the burning on my cheeks, my manner was as composed as that of the woman before me. "However, the door must be fixed so it doesn't—stick."

Another long stare; then the black eyes were jerked away. "Of course," she said in a matter-of-fact tone. "Now come with me, and I'll show you the children's room."

The children's room was reassuringly obvious. Once a sort of upstairs double parlor, its folding doors were flung wide to make it one apartment. Two little beds held an alcoved place at one end, showing that it served the purpose of a complete nursery.

AS Miss Haldayne left us, the two pale children came forward politely to receive me. Again I was overcome by the incongruity of their frail little bodies and their sturdy surroundings.

"Wouldn't you like me to take you for a run on the beach?" I asked, putting an arm about each, grieved to find how completely my reach could encircle their slenderness. The sun was breaking through the fog now, and I longed to put some life and color in those pale babies.

They stood uneasily under the caress, only too evidently it was a strange experience for them. Joan, the eldest, finally spoke.

"We couldn't. Aunt Eliza won't let us. We play in here, and sometimes when it's nice and bright, she lets us play on the ocean-veranda for an hour or two."

"You never go out!" My amazement fairly exploded from me.

Joan, a solemn little mite of eight, contented herself with shaking her head, her serious dark eyes fixed on my face as though trying to read my expression.

My indignation flared up. The poor youngsters were practically prisoners in that great dismal house. That explained the pale faces, the macaroni-like bones. At that moment Eliza Haldayne became a child-devouring ogre to my indignant fancy. "Why, that's absurd!" I was bursting out unwisely, when those two steady stares recalled me.

"There's lots of toys. Would you like me to show them to you?" The little boy spoke in a monotonously polite tone. "There's a new steam engine that runs around the room, only it won't run any more. Maybe you could make it work if you tried."

He led the way to a great closet at the end of the room and opened the door to show a vast conglomeration of playthings systematically stored within. I was treated to another surprise. Never outside of a toy-shop had I seen such an expensive array. A doll house four feet high stood complete, from the little red brick fireplace and "mahogany" dining-room set, to the toy mop standing behind the miniature kitchen range. Expensive and intricate mechanical toys were stored in Harry's end of the space. A great doll, as large as Joan herself, sat in a rocker and stared at us out of heavily fringed blue eyes.

Toys that would set the average child delirious with delight, toys which must



have cost a small fortune and which accorded ill with the shabby automobile and the general air of cheese-paring which overhung the rest of the house! It was as though this means had been taken to make up to the children for their lost liberty. I was compelled to revise my opinion of Miss Haldayne. Surely she was not indifferent to children when she bought them playthings such as these; it must be misdirected zeal which caused her to keep the children virtual prisoners.

OUTSIDE in the hall I found her and spoke in a carefully casual tone. "I want to take the children for a run on the beach, Miss Haldayne. It's a pity to waste a fine day."

The woman paused in her quick, business-like walk and faced me frowningly, her lips pursed over her large square teeth. "I don't want the children running around the dunes. No telling what might happen to them. Tramps." She jerked out the phrases characteristically.

The obvious weakness of that emboldened me to protest.

"Why, there aren't likely to be tramps on this lonely shore. Besides, I'll be with them all the time. The children must have more sun, Miss Haldayne. They'll fall ill if they don't get out more."

The unspoken accusation in my tone appeared to make her wince inwardly. Unconsciously, as I later found out, I had flicked the tenderest spot of her conscience—the fulfillment of her duty.

Her prominent black eyes shifted to the mesh-covered window.

"All right. Go ahead, then. But only for an hour, and that in the middle of the day. Down on the beach's all right. Don't go out of my sight. Don't take 'em over the dunes, either. Mind that; I don't want them near the dunes on the east of the house. If you can't heed that, they'll not go at all."

The brusqueness of her tone roused my indignation, but I answered with all the quiet dignity at my disposal: "I'm only thinking for the children's good, Miss Haldayne. I have no desire to go any place you forbid."

Her eyes jerked back to me with a glint of apologetic humor in their black depths. "A porcupine can't grow ostrich plumes," she gave out cryptically—which was as near an apology as any human being had ever received from Eliza Haldayne.

At the unusual prospect of a run on the beach, the children shed their gnome-like strangeness and became normal youngsters. After one abashed moment at the strangeness of it, the little girl flung her self at my neck and clung there with an unchildish ferocity that touched and startled me.

"I love you, I love you lots, Miss Belmont!" she whispered almost fiercely down my collar. "I feel like girls in books I've read. Oh, I'm so happy!"

Shaken almost to the point of tears by this, and gaining mental relief in thinking murderous thoughts of the severe woman downstairs, I bundled them into their coats. The unexpected liberty acted 'as a Moses' rod on their high spirits. One each side of me, they had begun to chatter like little magpies, finding a hysterical relief in turning their little brains inside out for my benefit, heaping me with scraps of the books they had read, of the queer mental games they played together, of all the weird happenings of a too precocious imagination. I was all the more amazed to hear silence fall like a blight on each chattering voice and feel the reluctant lag in their footsteps as I started bustling down the hall with them.

"Why, what is it, Joan?" I asked the little girl. The hall was empty; yet both children were staring down its dreary length with wide, dreading eyes.

"Miss Belmont, let's go down the other stairs—" It was Harry who piped up.

"Why?" I asked curiously. My gaze followed theirs. My room and theirs were located about the center of the hall. At one end was the crooked staircase down which I had descended to breakfast this morning. The other duplicated it exactly, even to the long, narrow, red-curtained window which stood in the bend midway and gazed sullenly over lupine-dotted sand dunes.

THERE was nothing else, so far as I could see; yet the children had come to a dead stop, and their eyes were fixed on it in fascinated horror.

"Why, Harry? Why should we use the other stairs?"

This time it was Joan who replied, her eyes still focused in dread. "There's a room at the bottom we mustn't go in. Harry and I call it Bluebeard's Chamber."

"Why mustn't you go in?" I was secretly proud of the humorous offhandness



of my tone which gave no suspicion of the fearful thrill which overswept me at that awed little whisper.

Joan shook her head. "Aunt Eliza told us that we never must. And she looked so—so angry, and she frowned so, that we were scared."

"Of course it's right for you to obey your aunt," I came back righteously. "She probably has some good reason for not wanting you in there, but I don't think you need be afraid."

They shook their heads in concert, not in the least reassured. "Nobody's allowed to go there, Aunt Drusilla neither. Hoang never goes there. Only Aunt Eliza, one day. Harry dared me, and I tiptoed to the stairs and hid behind the window-curtain. I said I wasn't afraid, but I was. And I looked between a little slit in the curtain down at the door of the Bluebeard Chamber. It was sort of dark down there. Then I heard some one open the door and I thought I'd nearly die, but it was only Aunt Eliza coming out. She looked awful cross, and I ran upstairs and down the hall to our room as fast as I could. I felt like I was going to die, and my heart beat like anything."

It was a relief to the highly strung child to pour out to an older person the crammings of her fearful little brain.

"But when the door was open, could you see in back of your aunt? Into the room?"

I knew that I should not have asked this of those trusting youngsters, but my own curiosity was growing alarmingly.

Joan shook her head, her voice was a scared whisper. "I couldn't see good; I was so scared. Afterward I tried to remember to tell it to Harry. It was all dark; it looked like the shutters were fastened over the windows; and all I could see was something all shiny, like a terrible face. It looked straight at me, Oh-h!" She shivered.

In spite of myself the words sent a chill along my own backbone. "You must have imagined it, dear. It is probable your aunt only has the room shut up to save cleaning," I guessed with false heartiness. But my tone did not convince myself, let alone those frightened youngsters.

WE descended the frequented stairs to the downstairs portion. The broad lower veranda was deserted; the sun had conquered the last of the fog army and lay reassuringly warm and golden on the

weather-stained boards. The fierce winds which rose every afternoon were sleeping as yet; the dunes stretched in tawny drowsiness under the arch of a lapis-lazuli sky. Twisting and turning until it was lost in the distant haze stretched the road we had traveled last night, a dun-colored ribbon between hummocks of sand. The ocean was running high and green; the ugly stretch of beach which bordered the little bay at low tide was covered. The scene was not without a certain lonely charm this morning.

Freed from the house's depressing atmosphere, the children chirped like shivering little sparrows thawing in the sun. My own spirits bounded upward. I had let my imagination run away with my common sense, Reason scolded. That episode of the locked door was doubtless the peculiarity of an eccentric countrywoman. The children had worked a fascinating but ridiculous mystery about a locked room; I was here to curtail that trait in them, not to encourage it.

Strong with a mighty carelessness, I shot a half-challenging glance over my shoulder at the old building basking in the growing heat.

It stared insolently back with blank, sun-flooded eyes; the front veranda was still deserted, but my gaze was drawn to the bay window of the parlor on the corner. Half hidden though she was by the faded velvet hangings, I recognized the great square form of Eliza Haldayne watching intently, not as one might think, after the skipping forms of the children, but head turned fearfully, unwaveringly upon the eastern sand dunes of which she had warned us.

### CHAPTER III

#### SHADOWS OF FEAR

TRYING to write consecutively the events of my first few weeks at Dune House, I find myself baffled. There were no events, if one were strictly truthful: the everyday tasks of teaching and playing with the children, of first listening to, then trying to avoid Miss Drusilla's fatuous and tiresome ramblings, and of reading the books I had brought down with me—these can hardly come under that head. As to the mystery which I felt underlying everything, that knowledge of something wrong which I had sensed since the first night of my arrival,



it refused to come out in the open with any one happening but skulked behind every work and every action with maddening vagueness.

After that one passage of words between us Miss Haldayne raised no objection to my taking the children for a run on the beach each day. And though the sight of her, always half concealed behind the faded hangings of the bay window, when I did so, gnawed irritatingly at my nerves, I did not appear to notice; nor did I allow it to turn me from my purpose.

For a long time I could not classify the vague emotion which appeared to underlie the actions of the three adults. At the quiet meals, broken only by flabby Miss Drusilla's rambling monologues or Miss Haldayne's curt orders to Hoang, I tried to analyze it.

Relations between the two sisters, it was easy to see, were strained; in fact, they had reached the stage of actual dislike, garrulous and spiteful on Miss Drusilla's part, contemptuous on Miss Haldayne's. One felt it as an almost tangible undercurrent. Though obviously afraid of her sister, Miss Drusilla took the delight of a mischievous child in irritating her with trifles, gnat-stings which the older woman brushed impatiently away, pausing to take a determined slap at them only when plagued beyond endurance.

At first this rather amused me. Later it got on my nerves. My first pity for Miss Drusilla had given way to a very whole-hearted exasperation once she had trailed me about the house pouring her whining complaints in my ears. She had base enough for them, poor woman; but it was impossible to see that jellyfish-like mound of flesh giving itself the airs and graces of a coquettish young beauty without becoming annoyed. The only time I had ever caught Miss Haldayne in anything save a preoccupied alertness had been an afternoon when I tried unsuccessfully to turn Miss Drusilla's conversation from her droned recollections of social triumphs. Looking up in exasperation, I saw Eliza Haldayne watching us from the door of the shadowy dining-room. That swift upper glance of mine surprised a sardonic gleam of humor in her black eyes.

It was only for a second, then she had turned on her broad heel and left us; but that brief instant had flung an invisible bond between us. I had caught a glimpse of her rare human side, and ever after that

she seemed more approachable, less severely capable. And later I was to have further revelation of this side of her character. That night, when the children were in bed, she entered the room where I sat reading and stood rather grimly regarding me. She had something on her mind. It came out abruptly. There was little beating about the bush with Eliza Haldayne.

"Do you think my sister's pretty?"

That term, in connection with the creature I had disrespectfully named in secret the "white rabbit," brought me up gasping.

"Lord, no!" I brought it forth with unflattering sincerity.

The other woman regarded me musingly. "Hum-m-m. Not now perhaps. Look there."

She pointed a spatulate finger at a faded blue plush-covered album which occupied an honored and isolated place on the lower shelf of a hideously carved what-not. Obediently I opened the fat volume.

THERE was the usual collection of homely and self-conscious strangers encased in the gold filigree: bewhiskered men with too much neck and too little collar, women with frizzed hair, clothed in basques and balloon sleeves. An old man with fierce bright eyes peering from a jungle of side whiskers I took to be the father of them both; then came the likeness of a slender half-grown girl so much like Joan that I knew it for her mother; then two pictures, side by side on the page, which left me gasping. How they managed to be so different, yet at the same time so cruelly alike, I could not say. A beautiful fair-haired girl looked up at me from clear childish eyes. The fresh young face was perfect in contour and, one judged, perfect in coloring. The neck rose flowerlike from the elaborate ruffle of an evening dress. Opposite, in cruel contrast, was a photograph of the other sister, apparently taken at the same time. The fierce black eyes burned as zealously as they did now; the mouth was stubborn and wide, the thin face surmounted an uncompromising linen collar. But this my eyes took in only briefly; like a steel to the magnet the flowerlike beauty of the other face drew and held them.

"That—that can't be Miss Drusilla!" And my tone had an unflattering edge of amazement upon it.

Though her expression had not changed, I knew that my shocked disbelief had not displeased Miss Haldayne.



"She was twenty-five then. She was beautiful."

"Yes, she was beautiful—then," I stammered, still staring at the picture in fascination. Before my eyes the round, girlish chin multiplied; the soft cheeks became jowls; the firm, sweet neck grew gross and flabby. I closed the book with a queer repulsion, and found that Miss Haldayne had left the room.

"One thing sure, Ann Belmont," I told myself in triumph that night as I piled into the great wooden bed, "you've discovered Miss Haldayne's weak spot. She was resentful of her beautiful sister in days gone by, and the habit's become chronic. Grotesque as it sounds, she's still jealous of her."

For a long time I remained awake, watching the weak moon stamp the reflection of the meshed window on the faded carpet as I tried to picture the life of the sisters years before. Miss Haldayne's words, when she engaged me, floated back now with new meaning: "You're not pretty, thank God. I can't stand a pretty fool."

I could imagine childish slights piling up, the pettings and luxuries ever awarded the pretty child, while the iron entered the starved, lonely soul of the other.

"But it was something deeper than that," I sagely protested. "Childish slights alone never brought that look into Miss Haldayne's eyes. What did two women ever quarrel over, deeply, bitterly? What but a man? One had attracted where the other had not. Apparently neither had won. It was a man!" I assured myself solemnly, more than a little pleased at my keenness. "Good Lord, what a scene they must have raised between them!" And satisfied with my solution, I turned over and went to sleep.

FROM then on, I sensed the undercurrent of antagonism more keenly. So intent was I in reading into the actions of the sisters my own suspicions that I lost sight of those other mysteries which had baffled me. Throughout one morning of teaching Joan and Harry, the impulse to search the old album for some loose thread to the solution tortured me. I found myself watching the clock, waiting for school-hours to be over, that I might hurry to the little sitting-room where it lay on the carved what-not.

Since the daily romps on the sand, and

my advent as playmate and confidant, the youngsters had evolved into more normal beings, and after their study time, they called for a promised romp with the tyranny of the average child. My intention became deeper rooted the more it was postponed, and I slipped away at the first chance, flushed and breathless from a pillow-fight, slid into the hall and sped wildly to the staircase before my tormentors should discover and follow.

I took the stairs two at a time, but silently. The door, much to my surprise, for the room was used as a small sitting-room by both sisters, was closed. It had always stood ajar before this, its sedate old furniture, fetched "around the Horn," grouped primly around a marble-topped center-table. I was about to grasp the knob, knowing that neither Miss Haldayne nor her sister were likely to be in it at this hour of the day, when a smothered shriek from the shadowy hall behind me suspended my hand in mid-air and set my scalp a-tingle.

"Not in there! Never go in there!" It was Miss Drusilla's voice, and it was edged with genuine fright.

I wheeled, to find her regarding me white-faced and breathless from the dark depths of a small linen-closet.

In my headlong rush to escape Joan and Harry I had bolted down the wrong stairs, and my hand had been on the knob of the forbidden room. The pile of sheets fallen to the floor in agitation showed what Miss Drusilla's occupation had been. Now she bent and automatically recovered them. Even her wheezing held a frightened note. As for me, my heart was beating high, but I brazened it out.

"It's my mistake. I got mixed on the staircases. I meant to go into the sitting-room."

Miss Drusilla now creaked over to me, the sheets clasped in her arms making her more tremendous than ever.

"Ann, don't let Miss Haldayne know you started to open that door. Of course it's locked, anyway; but still—"

"Why?" I couldn't resist putting in.

"My sister doesn't like it. She won't let anyone go in there."

"Why?" I asked again. It was rude but I was desperate.

The woman was making obvious efforts to draw me from the fatal door lest her sister appear on the stairway above us. "I don't know why." Her voice was al-



most tearfully agitated. "But don't go near there, Ann. Miss Haldayne will be furious."

SO evident was her distress that I let her lead me away, catching the contagion of her own fear as we passed along the dark hall. At the door of the sitting-room she turned, the light from the window falling on her doughlike face. She was more composed now, though her breathing was still a heavy wheeze. She spoke with a ludicrous attempt at dignity, as though to counterbalance the terror she had shown.

"There's nothing, of course, to be excited over. It's just a room we never use, and my sister has shut it up. It's only a whim of hers, but we never cross it; she's rather set in her ways, you know, Ann."

I did know, and as she left me, I turned and walked slowly upstairs to the children again, all thoughts of searching the old album driven from my head.

The days which followed alternated for me between exciting dread and a scornful ridicule of myself when I thought I was seeing mystery where none existed.

"You're a fool, my dear Ann," I would tell myself severely. "What have you to build your suspicions upon save two impolite and unpleasant elderly women, two pale youngsters kept too much indoors from misdirected zeal, a door locked upon you once—unpleasant, certainly, but not fatal—and an old room shut from the rest of the house."

And for a brief spell it seemed that I had called the turn. One day's program was maddeningly like the rest. The entire household rose at half-past seven and thirty minutes later ate breakfast together in the breakfast-room on the ocean side of the house. I had to admit that Hoang, though I had never recovered from my first dislike of him, was an ideal servant. How he managed to cook the food and at the same time serve it so punctiliously I could never understand. His silent, blue-lined figure was always in attendance whenever one put out a hand for an article.

From nine to ten I trotted the children on the beach, putting them through a brisk race that sent our circulation tingling. Joan was developing golden freckles on her round, childish nose; and Harry was more like a normal boy, less like a six-year-old ghost. The wind and the sun was changing me as well. Standing before my mirror one day, noting the yellow glints the sun

had coaxed into my wind-ruffled hair, the loss of the dark circles of anxiety about my eyes, the natural oval of my face regained through wholesome food and unbroken rest at night, I thought resentfully that Miss Haldayne needn't have thanked heaven *quite* so fervently, on the day she had engaged me.

School hours took up the time to one-thirty—a sort of story-telling game, this had degenerated into, warranted to raise the hands of the orthodox pedagogue in holy horror. But allowance should be made; inexperienced, one cannot be expected to know everything; and oddly enough, the children did seem to be learning something.

At two-thirty Miss Drusilla could be heard wheezing heavily along the hall to her bedroom. Ever preoccupied, Miss Haldayne flew up and down the lower hall, her arms full of sheets and clothes rough-dried, her lips pursed queerly over her large square teeth, while she hummed a tuneless little song like the far-off droning of an extremely busy bee. While she was never anything save brusque, her manner was not unkind. In her peculiar way I think she had become rather fond of me, though this took the form of being absolutely free from demonstration either one way or the other. Only to Hoang and to me was vouchsafed this impersonal approval, as though in her own mind we were accepted as intellectual peers.

Being thus lumped with the Oriental was hardly flattering. To save my soul I could not help regarding him with a vague dislike, with suspicion, though of what I suspected him, it would be hard to say. There was something in his suddenly materializing behind you when he was thought to be in the other end of the house; something in the shock of raising your eyes to find his unwinking black ones scrutinizing you, which was disconcerting, to put it mildly.

Even Miss Drusilla, though generally oblivious to anything save her own verbal ramblings, unconsciously sensed this and made no attempt to conceal her antipathy to "that heathen," as she called him. This term was a little unfair, as I discovered one day when I passed Hoang's half-opened door and caught a quick flash of the worn Bible which lay on his corner table.

The only change in our daily program



occurred when Miss Haldayne made a trip in the machine to the nearest town for supplies. For days before this would happen, I could sense a rigidly concealed dread in her mind, a grim buckling up to some disagreeable task which must be done. It was always early morning when she started, very early, for she was missing from breakfast at such times; and in the full glare of afternoon the old machine would be seen limping on its return trip along the dun ribbon of road winding through the sand dunes. After three trips I thought I could detect a visible relief in her face and voice, as though some danger had been safely rounded.

Her self-control was marvelous. She was one of these stoical women who take a confession of their troubles as a sign of weakness. That was why I was the more amazed when she suddenly stopped me one morning as I was leaving the deserted breakfast-table.

Miss Drusilla ambled on, her creaking corsets appearing to protest on their own account. The children had run ahead; we two were alone. I thought my employer was about to make some comment on my method with the children, and a trifle uneasily, I was reviewing the past weeks in my mind. Then I raised my eyes to hers as she turned from the window to face me. I almost recoiled visibly. Her face was tense and gray with fright.

## CHAPTER IV

### WATCHING

THE clatter of Harry's heavy little shoes on the uncarpeted parts of the stairs floated back into the breakfast-room and was the only sound to break the strained silence. The sight of the generally stoical woman before me, so unmistakably shaken, set my cowardly spirit a-tremble within me, and I had great trouble keeping my face expressionless.

I must have been successful, for Miss Haldayne spoke abruptly as soon as the last faint scuffle told that the children had reached the sanctuary of the upper hall. Her forehead was more deeply creased than usual, but her tone was grim and her words as acid as ever.

"Ann, are you one of those busy people who have to stick their noses into everything and have a black and white explanation of every thing before they do it?"

My craven soul was shaking, but I answered this cryptic remark stoutly enough.

"I hope not, Miss Haldayne. It doesn't sound pleasant. Why?"

"Will you help me—do me a favor?" She put it grudgingly enough, running true to a lifelong habit of giving and desiring no favors.

"If I can." I was secretly proud of my noncommittal tone.

"I want you to stand in the bay window in the back parlor and watch the sand dunes toward the east. I'm watching the front—I know you saw me, but I haven't eyes in the back of my head, and I can't watch two places at once."

"Why in the world do you do that?" was on the tip of my indiscreet tongue, but luckily I remembered and changed it to a quiet:

"And if I see anything?"

I received an approving glance. "Tell me, of course."

She lead the way through the hall to the gloomy, red-hung back parlor. I followed, heart pounding, face rigidly wooden, imagination aflame and running wildly once more.

At this early hour the side of the house was in deep shadow. The room was austere and cold, the solemn black walnut furniture stared unbendingly back at me. The high-lights on the glass of half-seen pictures on the wall were unpleasantly reminiscent of Joan's "shiny thing." Here Miss Haldayne ensconced me behind the unpleasantly thick red curtain. My figure would be hidden from anyone looking up outside, by the half-folded-back shutter. My gaze was focused through the wire mesh to the dismal waste of sand.

It was very still and a little awesome when Miss Haldayne had left, securely shutting the door which lead to the hall. The thickness of the walls kept any reassuring household noises from penetrating. I was shut in with the black walnut furniture and the unpleasant high-lights and was apparently as inanimate as they. A slow chill began at the base of my spine.

THE sand had drifted high against the house on this side and was a bare six feet below the window. From there it billowed away as far as the eye could reach, a tawny ocean, petrified as it was about to break into waves.

Hidden in the curtains, I kept my eyes fastened on the waste until the muscles



ached and little flashes and swirls of light swam before me. What was I watching for? What was out there hidden in the dunes, that "something" Miss Haldayne feared? She was no ordinary woman to take fright for a trifle.

What was it Joan had said she saw in the secret room?—a "terrible face—all shiny?" The words carried a chill with them. Unconsciously the notion persisted until that became the thing for which I was looking, out there in the dunes. I could imagine it staring back at me, something less than human, animated by some diabolic form of life—seeing me plainly despite the shielding shutter and the wire mesh, enjoying my false security with gleeful malice and chuckling to itself in the concealing grass. . . .

The shadow of the house shortened; the sun crept insidiously up and around. The dunes seemed to gasp under the glare, their black, abrupt reflections becoming less and less as noon approached. In all the landscape there was not a breath; nothing moved; the earth was a prostrate, exhausted thing cooped beneath the brazen bowl of the sky.

My back ached from the straight-backed chair; my eyes were growing heavy from staring into the gleaming waste. I found myself slumped forward, my forehead pressed hard against the wooden leaves of the shutter. I had slept. After that I disobeyed Miss Haldayne's orders never to cease watching for a moment, while I took a brisk trot about the room. This stalled off sleep for a while, and I resumed my seat behind the red curtains, determined to see the day through no matter how dreary.

The scene outside was unchanged, save that the sand hummocks had begun to cast slight black shadows on the other side. The heat was unabating; a cloud of gnats danced drowsily just outside the window. It was the only sign of life in all those miles.

A SOFT scuffing behind me set my head flying around. Hoang stood there with my luncheon on a tray, his marmoreal face expressing no surprise at my peculiar occupation.

I ate like a sentry on duty, eyes never deserting the scene straight ahead. When the tray had been removed, and the door closed noiselessly behind Hoang's silent figure, time settled down to an endless wait again. The room was not so hostile now.

My eyes finally chose and focused upon a great dune several hundred yards away. It was the grandfather of all the dunes, its top ridiculously like a bald head, with a straggling tuft of bunch-grass growing where the earlocks would be. It fell away to a series of lower dunes on the right; around the left of its base was scooped a deep gully which reason told me would be the logical approach of anyone toward the house. All was outlined in dazzling light villainously unkind to the eyes. The top began to swim as the day waxed later; to my tired eyes bunch-grass, light, sand and sky ran together in one conglomerate mass speckled with blackness.

I don't know what awoke me. I don't even know if I really slept or only swayed forward as I had done so often before. I found myself cold and rigidly erect in the chair, my eyes directed to the clump of lupine which choked the neck of the gully about the dune's base. The lupines had shaken their purple spikes; and in that still landscape the slight movement had stood out in damning revelation. One tall spray still swayed slightly; it would sway like that if a figure had either wriggled into or away from the shelter of its branches.

My eyes ached with the intensity with which I sought to penetrate the labyrinth of gloom and black shadows entangled in its foliage. Over me crept a horrible numbness, the ghost of fear, when we do not know what it is we fear. The swaying of the topmost lupine had stopped now; the whole scene swam in uninterrupted stillness and heat.

Then my nerves jumped painfully again, and the next minute relaxed weakly with relief. All the lupine and bunch-grass in sight was swaying and dancing. A little spray of sand blew loose from the top of the great dune and scattered cloudlike to the gully below. The afternoon winds had sprung up from the ocean and were hurling themselves inland.

Then doubt came stalking close on the aftermath of the relief I felt. The lupine in the gully had been sheltered; even now, while that on top of the dunes was all ablow, the shrubs in the low places were motionless. Yet the flowers in the gully had stirred, and had stirred while all in sight was still!

No need to get hysterical over every blowing bush, I told myself severely. No need to torture Miss Haldayne with ghosts



of my own manufacture. It must have been the wind. Tomorrow I would steal over to the little gully; I would investigate, to lay the ridiculous fear that persisted. If there had been anyone under the lupines, the trodden sand would prove it.

**B**UT that served to keep me alert all the afternoon. Not until gray dusk closed coldly over the scene, rendering vision uncertain, and the sad fog-wraiths drifted thinly between the lonely hummocks of sand, did Miss Haldayne come to relieve me of my long vigil.

Her face was a blot of white against the dusk of the room. I could not read her expression, her voice was as self-contained as ever.

"Thank you, Ann; you will be glad to go, I suppose. You must be tired to death."

At the door she paused, and her voice was a trifle apologetic. "Don't say anything about this to my sister or the children. They think you were lying down in your room; I told 'em you didn't feel well."

I assented, of course, while my mind was struggling as to whether or not I should tell of the shaking lupine. It was on the tip of my tongue, when obeying some curious impulse I crowded it back again. Time enough for that when I had investigated the gully for myself. I had no desire to acknowledge that I had taken fright at the wind—nor that I had fallen asleep at my vigil.

It might have been the weary note in her voice, or the sense of conspiracy which bound us together, but for the first time I threw away my customary caution in speaking to the woman before me and allowed my impulse to escape in words.

"Miss Haldayne,"—I almost gulped in my excitement,—"I don't want you to think I'm a 'busy' person, and of course if you don't want to tell me, I don't mind; but is there anything I can do to help you? I—I've never betrayed a confidence."

She hesitated there in the gloom, and her voice came deeper, the nearest to a caress Eliza Haldayne seemed able to come.

"You're a nice girl, Ann Belmont." That was all, but she still stood motionless. I remained where I was, scarcely breathing, my eyes turned on the white patch which was her face.

I realize now that it must have been a

tremendous struggle for this self-reliant, austere woman to break the habit of a lifetime; but it was a silent struggle, its presence showing only in her indecision. When she did speak, it was to have the words drag reluctantly from her.

"Maybe it would be best; it's getting beyond me. It's beginning to frazzle my nerves, I'll admit."

Again a silence which I did not seek to break; then suddenly, as one who fears they might weaken, she said abruptly: "Come on to my room. Maybe you can help."

**M**ISS HALDAYNE'S room was as severely practical and neat as that of a New England spinster. From the circular blue-and-gray rag carpet on the floor to the sparkling chimney of the enamel-based kerosene lamp standing primly in the center of a crocheted doily on a small marble-topped table at the bed's head, there was not an article in it which was not absolutely homely and useful. One thing alone marked an incongruous note. Where one looked to see fresh, severely starched scrim curtains to bear out the clean severity of the rest of the room, thick velvet hangings met the eye, their faded red a discord in this austere spotlessness. Through those folds no gleam of light could penetrate at night to mark the house to a watcher on the dunes. It sounded again the tense caution which I sensed over the rest of the place, and I turned to Miss Haldayne with visible relief at finding some tangible footing at last in this sea of vagueness.

She had grimly unlocked an old fashioned writing-desk standing between the windows, and taking a paper from one of the little pigeonholes, crossed to me.

After the slightest hesitation, as though already regretting her decision, she thrust it at me. "Read that," she directed curtly.

Handwriting straggled across the paper; large, ill-formed characters, almost childishly penciled.

*You're a fool to think you can hide. If not today, tomorrow. But sometime they'll come, as surely as day breaks, because—*

They dribbled off the paper, either because the uneven letters ran to the edge or because the writer was alarmed and dared not stop to finish.

I read them twice, and again the slow



chill began at the base of my spine because of the vague threat hid in the words. Then I raised my eyes to Miss Haldayne's face. She was watching me closely, almost desperately as one grasps at a straw of comfort.

"I found that lying on my desk when I woke this morning."

"What does it mean?"

For a moment her lips tightened; then: "I don't know." And I knew she lied.

"But I don't understand—"

"Neither do I," replied Eliza Haldayne irascibly. Talking about it appeared to ease the strain a trifle. "Once before, it happened. I have a sort of premonition of it. All the day before, I'm particularly stirred up and nervous."

The confession from the usually stoical woman, the very admission that her rigid body held nerves, I recognized as a sign of the intense strain she was under.

"Tell me about it," I said soothingly.

"There's nothing to tell, I told you." She took out some of the tension on me. "I got up this morning and saw my desk open. I never leave my things untidy like that. That was the way I found the other note."

"What did the other one say?"

**I**N answer she turned and took a piece of paper from a second pigeonhole. It was in the same rambling writing, contained the same veiled threat:

*How long do you think you can keep it up  
—burying your head in the sand like an ostrich?  
There's always a day of reckoning,  
and when they come—*

Then an indecipherable word trailing off the paper, as it had upon the other note.

I looked up, more at sea than ever. "And you haven't any idea who wrote it?"

"Who could write it?" Miss Haldayne was frankly impatient. "For heaven sakes, Ann, I thought you might help instead of asking foolish questions!"

This was not undeserved, and I took it meekly, studying the notes again. There was a vagueness about them which suggested the rambling taunts of a child or the irresponsibility of a demented person. I checked a shiver and turned the paper over. The other side was blank.

"Have you ever seen paper like this before?" I asked.

"Of course; it's my own—the kind I keep in my desk all the time. Somebody

gets in and writes it in this room while I'm asleep. That's just it; how do they do it? The writing-desk is locked when I go to bed. How do they get in, in the first place? There isn't a window in the whole place that can be entered. I went over 'em all today. The mesh is undisturbed, and the shutters lock from the inside. The first time, I thought they might have gotten in that way, so I put the mesh up. Doors are out of the question; every one's locked at night, and in the evening the whole house is lighted and I go over it. They couldn't get in and hide. Hoang looks too, before he blows the lamps out, before he comes upstairs."

This failed to reassure me. Knowing her prejudice in Hoang's favor, I spoke hesitantly. "You don't suppose he—"

My unspoken suspicion was met with the expected disdain. "Ann, don't be absurd. Why should Hoang write anything so ridiculous?"

"Why should anyone?" I answered stoutly.

I had her there, in the face of her denial as to the note's meaning. For a moment we stared blankly back at each other. The grayness of Miss Haldayne's face had not faded, though she was making a desperate effort to remain noncommittal. I was fighting a desire to glance nervously over my shoulder in the dusk. "They" suggested a collection of enemies, and we were only two women in a great lonely house.

"I don't know what the notes mean." She stuck to her lie bravely, though her lips were blue and taut. "But that isn't what's bothering me, Ann; it's—*how do they get in?*" This last was a whisper of anguish.

**I** LOOKED about at the walls with some wild idea about sliding panels and secret rooms. The walls, however, were like the rest of the rooms, smooth white plaster. There were two long windows, narrow and shuttered. The upper veranda did not extend along this side of the house; and there was a thirty-foot drop to the dismal garden below. Even presuming one could enter the bedroom, how could he get into the house to begin with, strictly guarded as it was.

Miss Haldayne was speaking still in that low, tense voice. "That childish handwriting is affected, of course. The language isn't childish; no child could think up and carry out a thing like that;



besides, the children don't know—" She checked herself abruptly as though realizing that she had said too much.

"Hoang—" I was beginning, unable to shake off my distrust for the Chinese.

"Ann, for heaven sakes, leave Hoang alone, will you? I tell you, he didn't."

"Well, that only leaves Miss Drusilla and myself," I said, exasperated. "You know I didn't. Do you think your sister did!"

I trembled inwardly at this unlucky speech when I recalled the dislike which existed between the two women, but Miss Haldayne disposed of this characteristically. "She hasn't brains enough," she said with unflattering frankness.

A horrible suspicion had flashed into my mind. Was that all who was left in the house? Suppose the room at the bottom of the staircase held something living, something which crawled up here in the dead of night while we lay sleeping and opened the door with devilish cleverness—a "terrible face, all shiny." I shivered and plunged into unwise speech.

"If there was anything in the house—*anything*—that felt spite and took this way to annoy you—" I felt that she must surely get my drift and fall upon the possible explanation. But Miss Haldayne's face was frankly puzzled as I faltered.

"Ann, what in the world are you driving at? Do you think disembodied spirits are hanging around to play tricks? No sir," she answered herself grimly. "Whoever wrote that is human, though they may be pure devil inside. But how in the world do they get in?"

I thought of all the mystery stories I had read, and ventured the next in a rather shamefaced manner: "You're sure there's no underground tunnel or anything like that?"

The idea excited no ridicule. For a moment she studied it gravely, then picked up the lamp and turned to the door. "Come on," she said grimly. "I never thought of that."

**L**UCKILY we met no one on the stairs, or they would have been amazed to see the supposedly sick me trailing Miss Haldayne with a lighted lamp in her hand through the bright hall. As usual, when twilight fell, Hoang had lighted the numerous lamps, and now each blazed on its little individual shelf, surrounded by its own golden radiance.

The Chinaman was washing dishes in

the warm, bright kitchen as we passed through. Again, as I looked at him, those unreasoning suspicions crowded my brain. Miss Haldayne, on the contrary, spoke the more pleasantly to him, as though in defiance to my unspoken thoughts.

From one corner of the large kitchen a flight of rough wooden steps led to the cellar below. This was cement walled and floored—stoutly made, to withstand the drifting sand outside. Our heels rang uncomfortably loud on the hard floor, and the shadows danced before us as we moved with our lamps—I had obtained one in the kitchen.

We searched the enormous basement from one end to the other, holding our lights high to examine the walls in their entirety, our silhouettes bobbing about with our movements. There was not the slightest thing on which to hang suspicion, not even though we tugged away boxes and barrels stored in one corner, and got ourselves hot and dusty moving potato-sacks.

As we came up the wooden stairs again and blew out the lamps on gaining the top, I could not resist speaking. "You're perfectly sure there's no one else in the house besides Miss Drusilla and the children and Hoang?"

"Of course," returned Miss Haldayne irritably. "Why do you harp on that string so much, Ann?"

There was nothing I could reply without revealing too keen an interest in that room at the foot of the stairs; so I kept still.

"No," Miss Haldayne paused again, on her way to her room. "There's no two ways about it. Some one got into this house—the good Lord knows how, and wrote that!" A spasm of fright contracted her face at the thought of her bedroom being silently entered in the middle of the night; and I shivered.

"I got it into my head that those words 'if not today, tomorrow,' meant that—that something—might try to get into the house today; that was why I had you watch, Ann."

She was silent for a moment, her eyes fixed on something I could not see, her thoughts far away. A sort of gray weariness had fallen on her face, a dread that was wearing her out. I felt a sudden gush of pity for the lonely woman, and as if she sensed it, she withdrew her gaze until it rested on my face, and her voice was so mild that I started.

"Run along now, and get some 'sup-



per. You look all tuckered out. You're a good girl, Ann. Go get some rest."

## CHAPTER V

## WHAT THE SAND REVEALED

NEXT morning a slight restraint appeared to have risen in Miss Haldayne's manner toward me. Already she regretted her confidence, I could read in her averted glance; and catching my clue from this, I returned her brief nod with the briefest of good mornings and gave my entire attention to the two children. Apparently no third mysterious note had been left, and Eliza Haldayne once more felt capable of handling the situation alone.

Immediately after breakfast, as though fearful that I might refer to the happenings of yesterday, she slipped into the kitchen while Miss Drusilla's ample figure still blocked the entrance; but one quick glance over my shoulder as I started with Joan and Harry on the morning walk revealed the now familiar bulge in the velvet hangings of the bay window, and I knew that the odd woman was keeping her lonely vigil over us.

The children's chatter spattered off me like so many raindrops this morning. My thoughts, as well as my eyes, ever recurred in dread to the great baldheaded dune toward the east where yesterday the lupine had moved. I set the children wild with delight by allowing them to wade in the shallow margin of the little bay while I sat atop a high dune near them, guardian of two small pairs of shoes and stockings. The sun had broken through the fog early this morning; before me a sea of ultramarine and silver flashed and danced. The bare, ugly beach was becomingly hidden by its shining ripples; hidden too were the murderous looking ropes of kelp. The little creek which meandered through the sand, almost sinking into it before it reached the water, was a thin trickle of silver. Swooping sea-gulls and the two laughing children playing tag with the waves removed the brooding loneliness.

But my eyes would ever turn to the gully on the east and to the menacing growth of lupine which choked it. From here I could trace it back—a perfect passageway between the great dune and its shorter neighbor, an alley down which a man could wriggle his length unseen from the house he watched. But, however I

strained my eyes through the bright morning light, I could discern no movement in the bushes today.

NOT until the middle of the afternoon was I able to put into effect the resolve I had made the day before. I had picked my time well, I silently congratulated myself, as I walked with forced leisure down the shadowy upper hall. Unmistakable noises from behind Miss Drusilla's door bore witness to her slumbers. Miss Haldayne I had seen descend the stairs kitchenward a few minutes before. The children's treble voices floated in through the opened French window, pleasantly intermingled with the roar of the ocean.

At the top of the stairs I suddenly hesitated, overcome by a new impulse. There was a moment of silent struggle; then I was speeding up the hall again and down the stairs at the opposite end, the stairs which led down to Joan's mysterious Bluebeard Chamber.

At the landing in the bend I checked myself and remained peering with big eyes down into the gloom below. There was nothing very terrifying about the closed door, viewed dispassionately. The tall, thin window beside me gave a vista of windswept, sunflooded sand dunes billowing away to the horizon. My imagination, however, painted Joan's fearful little figure hiding behind the faded red curtain, round, brown eyes fastened on the door in the shadows below me. From the angle of the stairs here it would be perfectly possible to obtain a slanting view in the room if the door was open. The thought that "something all shiny, like a terrible face" might even now be staring straight toward me, its baleful gaze stopped only by a couple of inches of wood, sent a cold chill down my back.

A stealthy noise behind me wheeled me about, all nerves. The light from the window slanted harshly across the blue-lined figure of Hoang, standing there watching me, heaven alone knows how long. A blind panic descended upon me at the unexpectedness of it; my dislike rasped in my voice when I was able to speak.

"What do you want? Why did you sneak up on me like that?"

He bobbed his head, his long black eyes inscrutable. His tone was bland as ever.

"Missy Haldayne sen' me linen closet. Fetchem new towels for kitchen."



"The linen closet is nearer the other stairs than these!" I answered hotly. "Why did you come down this way?"

"Missy Haldayne say fetchem towels." His impassive stare displayed not the slightest embarrassment at the way I had trapped him. It was as though a curtain had been drawn close beneath the surface of those narrow eyes, and of the curious emotions swarming within I could only guess.

A sense of the maddening futility of my indignation surged over me. I forced myself to turn my back and continue dignifiedly down the stairs as though that had been my intention all along. Behind me came the soft pitter-patter of Hoang's slippers on the boards as he followed me, sending little shivers of dislike chasing themselves up and down my spine.

THE salt wind was grateful to my hot face as I struck off across the dunes. An anxious glance over my shoulder revealed no watcher from the house. I kept to the water along the frequented ground, nevertheless, only branching inland when I reached the farther side of the great dune where I had sat that morning.

It was comparatively easy for me to keep from sight of the house by working my way from swale to swale until I was well within the forbidden territory which Miss Haldayne had watched so assiduously from the bay window.

It was very hot in the deep gully around the great dune. The sand here had formed a thin crust which broke under my feet with little crackling noises. Toward the right the ground sloped away more level, and the house towered abruptly. Tennyson's words drifted idly into my head at the sight of it, and I repeated them whimsically under my breath as I cautiously followed up the little gully.

With one black shadow at its feet,  
The house through all the level shines,  
Close latticed to the brooding heat  
And silent in its dusty vines.

I became abruptly still, while a curious, cold dismay crept up from my heart. My eyes had not played tricks on me yesterday. The sand beneath the lupines was scuffed, as though a body had pressed there, and simultaneously I became aware of a pair of eyes watching me through the shelter of another group perhaps twenty-five feet up the gully—unwinking, Chinese eyes.

AFTER that first second of breathless horror, my mind gripped suddenly and became cool. I had not betrayed myself by any outward start; of this I felt sure. I forced my shrinking figure to turn with elaborate carelessness and pull a lupine from its dry twig with hands whose shaking was mercifully hidden from those watching eyes.

Instinctively I seized what seemed the only course to follow. It was apparent that the silent watcher believed himself unobserved, and I forced myself to act upon that belief—to appear taking a casual stroll while I stealthily worked my way back to the house.

I could feel that my face had gone white and cold, but my back remained stiff as I deliberately turned it on that hidden figure and sauntered back down the gully, every now and then pausing to tear a lupine from the bushes lining the side quite as though red hot tingles were not chasing themselves up and down my spine. I was called to fight the almost overwhelming urge to throw discretion to the winds and race madly for the house looming so temptingly near. More than once my strained imagination caught at the little trifling noises of the dunes—the rustle of wind through the bunch-grass, the whisper among the dried twigs of the lupine or the almost imperceptible passage of a gopher over the crust of the ground—and twisted them into the lurking footfalls of that silent watcher risen from his bed of sand and silently pursuing me down the gully.

The thought brought such a wave of terror to drag upon my steps that I deliberately dropped a flower as an excuse to turn around. Only the lupines swaying in the wind and the sun-flooded sand dunes met my eyes; a quick flash before my lashes swept down showed no pursuing figure. That silent form was still prostrate behind the whispering shrubs; the slanting eyes, I made never a doubt, still clamped to my loitering figure.

My courage had nearly dwindled when I mounted the shallow wooden steps of the house; my body was benumbed, every nerve strained to hold myself down to a walk. It required all my strength to turn the handle of the door. I slipped into the shadowy hall and shot the bolt after me; then my knees turned to water, and I slumped dizzily on the lowest step, sitting there lackadaisically like *Ophelia*, the



purple flowers drooping from my nerveless hands.

A hot flash of fear pricked my tortured nerves from their lethargy the next minute. In the half opened door of the front parlor the blue-lined figure of Hoang suddenly appeared.

There was something which spoke of a smoldering excitement beneath the Chinaman's usually calm exterior. It fairly hissed through his words as he nearly pounced on me.

"Missy Belmont, you see—something? Out there on dunes? You see something?"

THE staccato words roused a frightened indignation in me. I knew now, as well as though I had actually watched him, that Hoang had been peering behind those front red curtains while I made my painful way back to the house. Was there some bond between this too plausible Oriental and that narrow-eyed watcher in the sand? How otherwise would Hoang guess that I might have seen something. My attitude could be mistaken for weariness; my expression, I was certain, had remained under control. His words revealed guilty knowledge. He feared that his accomplice had been discovered; this I read into his unwonted agitation.

Oddly enough, this strengthened my anger and lessened my fright. I fixed my eyes upon him and replied severely: "I don't know what you mean, Hoang. Did I see what? What is there to be seen on the dunes?"

He seemed to realize his mistake. The blank curtains were drawn over his black eyes again, and the light, slanting through the narrow red panels of glass on either side of the front door, showed his neck-muscles stiffen as though he got them again under control.

"I think you seem—'flaid. You walk quick, breathe fast," he fended.

The thought that those two pairs of spying eyes had watched my defenseless figure sent a cold shiver down me again, but I answered boldly enough: "I'm afraid of nothing, Hoang; do you hear that? I'm afraid of nothing!"

I had risen and was staring fiercely at him as I flung out this defiance, my chin rounded, all my dislike showing in my face.

His own gaze dropped—guiltily, I thought. "Missy Belmont, you velly brave lady." And I seemed to detect a note of

mockery running through the simple remark.

I left him standing in the hall as I mounted the stairs to my own room, the slanting light from the door-panels picking his figure out like a faint red ghost amid the surrounding shadows. In my own room I dropped the lupines on the bed, noticing how my feverish clutch on their stems had stained my hands. My heart was beating like a triphammer. I forced myself deliberately to wash my face in cold water and rearrange my wind-blown hair; then, with a regained calm, outwardly at least, I sought Miss Haldayne.

I had not far to seek. As I stepped through the doorway, I saw her capable figure swooping up the hall toward the linen closet, her arms piled high with clean, crisp sheets, still warm from the ironing board. She was droning her little unmusical tune, a sign that the world was turning well with her. She turned as I called her name, the dreary little tune dying on her lips, a slight frown of annoyance appearing between her level black brows. It was apparent that I still reminded her unpleasantly of her regretted confidence.

"Well, Ann?" Her tone was frankly impatient. "Good lands, you look peaked today! A person'd think you'd seen a ghost."

"I haven't seen a ghost, Miss Haldayne," I replied in what I was relieved to find was a quiet, steady tone. "I've seen something very much alive, up there in the sand dunes."

For a moment the dark blood gushed into her face, then seeped slowly away, leaving a grayish tinge in its wake. She stood rigid, fierce black eyes burning into mine.

"What do you mean. Speak plain," she finally rasped out.

"Yesterday, while I was watching, I saw the lupines move, over toward the great dune at the east of the house. I didn't say anything to you, for I thought it was only the wind. Then I got to thinking it over, and I wasn't satisfied. I decided to see for myself. I went there this afternoon. There was some scuffed-up sand, as though somebody'd crawled on all fours under the shrubs, and not only that, but while I was looking, I felt some one's eyes upon me. Then I saw a Chinaman's face half hidden in the lupine and bunch-grass farther up the gully."



## CHAPTER VI

## THE HOWL IN THE NIGHT

"Go on!" I would never have recognized the hoarse tones as hers had I not been facing her.

"I'm sure he didn't know I'd seen him, so I pretended that I was only gathering lupines, and I worked my way back to the house. That's all."

There was a strained silence for perhaps half a minute. Then a visible pulling together of the woman before me, and I was hurt and vastly astonished to hear her loud laugh of scorn.

"Ann, you're developing nerves. You probably saw a stone or something, and took it for a face. Or tramps—you know I told you to keep away from those sand dunes. You might have wakened a tramp from his afternoon nap."

"A Chinese tramp!" I said quietly yet determinedly.

"Why not?" She came back at me belligerently. "Besides, chances are he wasn't Chinese, if you did see anyone—and I'm not admitting you did," she added doggedly.

I did not grow angry. There was something peculiarly pitiful in her brave attempt at poise.

"I'm sure of it, Miss Haldayne," I said gently. "And the man was Chinese. When I returned to the house, I saw Hoang in the hall. He had been watching me from the parlor window. It would be easy for him to be in touch with the Chinese in the dunes. Oh, Miss Haldayne, Hoang's at the bottom of whatever's worrying you; I'm sure of it! I don't trust him for a minute!"

"For heaven sakes, Ann!" This time her tone was frankly impatient. "Don't harp on that string any more. To listen to you, a person'd think poor Hoang ought to be hung. You saw a tramp in the dunes, if you saw anybody." She suddenly switched. "There's Harry crying. He's probably fallen and bumped that sore place on his forehead again. Run along, Ann, and see what ails him; hurry, will you?"

Hurt and angry, I turned away and branched down the hall to the upper veranda overlooking the ocean. Just as I reached an angle of the wall, I glanced involuntarily back.

Miss Haldayne was standing rigid, as I had left her, her face stamped with gray fear while clean sheets, fallen from the stack in her arms, lay unheeded on the floor about her.

THAT night Miss Drusilla was unusually loquacious at the supper-table, insisting on telling in detail of a house-party she had attended some twenty years before—where, it appeared to my rather spasmodic attention, a Polish prince and an army officer had proposed to her, and two scions of our very best families had insisted on messing each other's faces over the favor of a dance. We received the details of the dress down to the last stitch—what this one had said and that one had thought, and just how catty the other one had acted. Encouraged by the preoccupation of her usual dragon, she grew expansive and drooned throughout the courses like Tennyson's brook.

The children, too, were full of animal spirits, fortunately enough, for Miss Haldayne and I sat there like specters at the feast. Each time Hoang passed behind my chair with the noiseless tread, I involuntarily shrunk within myself, how noticeably I did not realize until I caught Miss Haldayne's black eyes fixed on me in frank impatience. My distrust of the servant was becoming a veritable obsession with me, and I sensed Hoang somehow felt this, and that in his peculiar way he resented it, though his manner was impenetrable as ever while he served me.

The lamps had been lighted early that night, I noticed, as I accompanied the children upstairs after dinner. Though it was still gray twilight outside, they were all blazing on their myriad little shelves, thrusting the farthest corners into yellow relief and painting our mammoth black shadows on the plastered walls as we toiled up the narrow staircase. Miss Haldayne's queer dread of the dark had illuminated the entire place tonight. From the top of the staircase the upper hall stretched away reassuringly empty, to the duplicating steps of the other end, where they plunged down to mellow gloom. To my morbid fancy the curtains seemed drawn together with greater care this evening; not the slightest flicker of yellow light could betray an opening to that silent watcher on the dark dunes.

The evening play-hour broke in on my abstraction—luckily, for my nerves were growing ragged. Since the inauguration of the romps on the sand, and the relief of

having a companion to whom they could speak their fearful little minds, the children had learned to play like normal imps. It was impossible to review real fears while following Joan's long legs as we flew from two hundred imaginary savages, gallantly headed by Harry on a rocking horse. Not until each was tucked in his little cot, Joan's dark head resting uneasily on rag knobs, for she had coaxed me into making "rag curls," not until I had received two moist kisses in good night and had blown out their light, did that ever-recurring dread swoop upon my cowering mind once more.

I HAD just shut the children's door behind me, preparatory to stepping into my own room, when I saw Miss Haldayne coming up the hall. She seemed barely to see me as she passed; her "good night!" was prefatory; her black eyes were abstracted. She carried an old tin lantern, one I had never before seen, and disappeared with it into the lighted cavern of her own room as I entered my own.

After making myself ready for bed, I stood in the dark, my face close to the wire mesh of the open window. The night wind blew cool about me; I could hear its soft stir as it swept over the unseen sand dunes below. There was no moon, and the stars were blotted out by a high fog. The complaining murmur of the sea came out of hollow blackness which seemed to encompass the silent house in the center of a new and lonely world. I turned my face in the direction of the bog dune, my fancy fearfully picturing the narrow-eyed watcher creeping closer in the cloaking darkness. I shivered; then, Scotch common sense overcoming Irish imagination, I trotted over to the big bed, ascertaining first that I had locked the door.

As I snuggled down between the cold sheets, I attempted to concentrate on the happenings of the last two days. This was the quiet reflection to which I had been looking forward since dinner time. Was there any connection between that silent watcher in the dunes and the mysterious notes? If there was, how had the writer entered the house, always lighted and guarded so carefully? What had Hoang to do with it? What had his agitation meant as I entered. Miss Drusilla liked him as little as I did; the children were afraid of his unsmiling silence; yet Miss Haldayne so vehemently asserted his inno-

cence! Hoang, the silent watcher, the threatening notes and the secret room—what were their sinister connection with each other?

I thought I was studying it with cool deliberation. I never knew when I fell asleep: I was imprisoned beneath a vast net, a net, which to my dreaming fancy, brushed the stars and crowded the horizon, yet which entangled my struggling footsteps as I endeavored to escape. I was struggling frantically, blindly; its dark mesh was over my face, over my whole body; my skin crawled with the feel of it, disgustingly like the soft cling of cobwebs. I was plucking it loathingly from my face, trying to scream and unable to do more than emit an agonized whisper, when with a crash which echoed and whistled drearily through what seemed miles of my brain, the sky fell.

I found myself bathed in a cold perspiration and sitting upright, my staring eyes strained through the darkness, while the whole house ached with the ring of the noise which had broken my nightmare. For a moment I was held rigid with terror; then, muffled by the plaster wall between, I heard Joan and Harry screaming with fright.

I JUMPED from my warm bed and ran to the door. The key was not in the lock; my bare foot encountered it on the floor where it had fallen. As I fumbled to find the lock in the darkness, I called to the frightened children that I was coming.

Smothered by the two doors came Harry's frightened and honest wail. "I'm—scared!" But his sobs lessened with the comfort of my voice. My groping fingers found the lock, and with a little gasp of relief I thrust the key in—only to turn cold to the ends of my bare toes. My door was locked from the other side.

I think the frightful knowledge of that held me rigid for a full half-minute, fearful to move in the cold darkness. The children's muffled wails redoubled, Joan's fearful treble urging me: "Hurry, please!"

My throat was dry and stiff when I finally forced my voice. Placing my lips to the crack of the door where the sound would carry the easiest to the next room, I shouted, the ring of my own voice in my ears setting my heart to throbbing painfully.

"Joan, listen! Something's happened to the lock of my door. Take Harry and



run to Miss Drusilla's room if you're too frightened to stay alone."

Her tearful voice floated faintly back. "We—can't, Miss Belmont. Our door's locked too. Oh, I'm so scared!"

That sent me limp against the damp wall. Both the children and I had been locked in our rooms. Why? By whom?

Between the muffled sobs next door there seemed an ominous silence brooding over the rest of the house. No noise had come from Miss Haldayne's room further down the hall, nor from Miss Drusilla's almost directly opposite; yet the sound of the shot—if it had been a shot—could not have failed to awaken them. The key in the other side of my door kept me from seeing through the keyhole, but the crack at the bottom showed no light in the corridor outside.

I was opening my dry lips to call some weak comfort to the sobbing youngsters, when the dawning words were smothered in my throat. A high, treble scream—a howl, rather—thin-edged, like the almost unendurable shriek of a violin-bow, vibrated through the darkness. Long-drawn, falling, sinking, rising abruptly again: "*Ai-eel! Ai-eel!*" Through its monotonous cadence, more dreadful through its very lack of human expression, I heard the children's muffled sobs stop, stricken with chill terror. My own blood was chilled; I felt my muscles tighten tensely; smothered though it was by dark distance and the sheltering door, the sound made the darkness palpitate about me and become tangible and threatening.

"*Ai-eel! Ai-eel!*"

My heart choked with the frightened blood which flung itself back on it. *What*, in God's name, was down there in the dark dining-room!

**T**HEN, when it seemed that human nerves must snap before the fear of the unknown, that human eardrums could not stand the shrill terror of it, it stopped—stopped with horrible suddenness as when a hand falls upon a windpipe, and the ringing silence which rushed in was quite as ominous in its own way.

I felt something wet trickling down my forehead—cold perspiration forced out through terror. I brushed it away automatically, and the movement, slight as it was, broke the tension and I found that I could use my lips.

"Joan, Harry—" I called and the words rasped out in a voice I did not recognize. "I'm here, I'm close to you. Don't be frightened."

A long smothered sob was my answer. Then Joan's voice piped: "Miss Belmont, what was that?" and Harry's wail broke out. "I want to go to you. I'm—scared!"

"I'm here, dear, close against the wall in the corner by the door." I tried to comfort the terrorized child though I had all I could do to strengthen my lips enough to form the words. "See, we're almost together, snuggle against the wall on that side. It's almost as if my arm was around you, isn't it?"

"N-no!" came Harry's honest though muffled roar, but his sister's embrace and the sound of my voice had taken the edge of panic from him. In between my shouted assurances my thoughts were racing madly hither and thither. The stillness below ached like a great void. Where were Miss Haldayne and her sister? Where was Hoang? Who had locked us in? Were we there that we might not interfere or were we prisoners to be attended to later? That was a pistol shot which had awakened me; but that howl—for it had been a howl, that was no spontaneous scream but an eerie wail, one whose cadence was one of intent,—what did *that* mean?

**W**ORLD-OLD fear, foolish fear of the supernatural flashed back from dead ages to chill me. Morbid readings of my college days leaped to life to further torment my quaking brain. Unconsciously Joan touched the key of understanding.

"Miss Belmont," the enforced calm of the little girl's voice told of the strong self-control inherited from her mother's side of the family, "That sounded something like Hoang, didn't it?"

The words were a revelation. With dizzying swiftness my mind flashed back to some literary data I had at one time looked up. Once again I was back in the high-arched ivy-covered university library. Through the amber glassed casement windows the light slanted mildly over quiet figures bowed over the long tables below. There had been a book, fat and brown covered; a book of curious customs, curiously worded:

"And when the spirit doth at length leave the body, then do all present beat their breasts and burst forth into lamenta-

tion, loud and exceeding shrill. A most unpleasant and doleful sound which greatly distresseth the ear. This the Chinese call *The Death Howl*." . . .

The thought left me dumb. Not until Joan's quaver insisted, "Didn't it, Miss Belmont, didn't it sound like Hoang?" was I able to reply in a shaky voice. "I don't know, Joan. It was too far away."

Still the ominous silence continued downstairs. I sternly forbade my mind to dwell on what that howl could have meant lest the thought send me into blind panic. All the wrenching and shaking of the knob of my door failed to loosen the key on the other side. I was not strong enough to break it open, nor had I any weapon with which to break one of the stout oak panels through. I could picture the children hunched shivering in their little nightgowns against the wall and calling to Joan I told her to tuck Harry in his cot and then to crawl into her own. Standing chilled in the dark was not going to help matters any.

I FOLLOWED my own advice when I knew that they had obeyed, pulling the warm bedclothes around my shivering body but sitting bolt up and wide-eyed in the dark. Not a sound filtered to my strained ears. That proved conclusively that Miss Haldayne had knowledge of the strange happenings of this night. If she was in her room I would have heard her by now. Miss Drusilla too—what share did she have in this wild escapade? She disliked Hoang as greatly as she disliked her own sister; surely she could not be in league with them; yet, directly across the hall from me as her room was, I would surely have heard her voice as easily as the children's. Even presuming that she too was locked in her room, it seemed hardly likely that she would have remained silent unless she had had forewarning of this disturbance. Were both the sisters downstairs at the time of that shot? and—a shiver shook me down to the soles of my bare feet—for whom was the Death-Howl?

Minute after minute ticked away by my little alarm clock on the dresser while my

thoughts swam in wild confusion. Evidently the warmth of the beds had overcome the children's terror, for their silence told of sleep. No sound from the black cavern of downstairs; no sound from the long hall outside my door. Smothering darkness pressed against the wiremesh of the windows as my eyes sought their direction, then I found myself uttering an exclamation of surprise and my feet were reaching for the floor.

A pinprick of light had appeared out there on the dunes, a light closely followed by another. I pressed my face against the cold, wet screen, regardless of the damp air blowing about my thinly clad body. The lights bobbed unsteadily, now appearing to go out in the blackness, now suddenly re-appearing; up and down, up and down, always that same distance apart; lanterns carried by two people climbing over the mounds and swales of sand.

I watched for nearly an hour, huddled in the quilt I had taken from the bed, until they finally winked out. Moment after moment passed and they did not prick out again. The chill finally drove me to bed.

After the cold and the strain, the warmth of the covers acted as a narcotic. I was puzzled to suddenly find myself with eyes wide staring at the daylight which filled the room. Though the squares of window showed dense fog instead of sunshine, it was plainly past my usual hour for waking. Memory swooped down on me with a shiver.

I swung to the floor and pattered across the room to the door. The knob turned easily in my hand; while I slept the door had been softly unlocked.

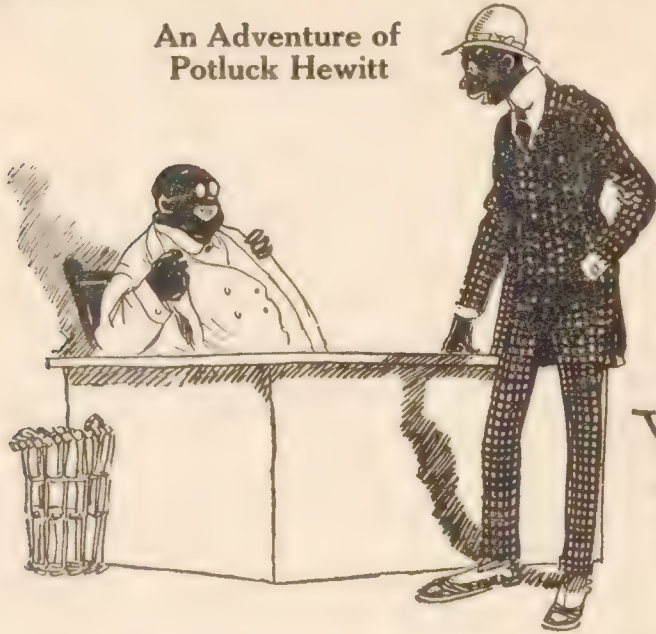
More shaken by that than if I had remained a prisoner, I hastily pulled my clothes on with trembling hands. A quick glance into the children's room—their door, too, was open this morning,—showed them sleeping; Joan tortuously, because of the rag knobs. I did not wake them but closed the door softly and turned with a wildly beating heart down the hall. What was I to find at the foot of those stairs? Which one of our little household would be missing?

**T**HE next installment of this fascinating novel will appear in the forthcoming March issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.



# Higher Education Does Pay

An Adventure of  
Potluck Hewitt



William  
Harper  
Dean

**H**IGH noon—mid-August high noon, at that. The very flies that buzzed about Aunt Henrietta's Chicken and Waffle Kitchen seemed half drugged with the tremendous heat, for they were unduly inactive at this hour when the kitchen was packed to bursting with ravenous negroes from the Baton Rouge water-front and emitting from every window the tantalizing incense that rose from hissing, sputtering pans and griddles. If the temperature was ninety-four, the humidity was ninety-five. The whole Delta wilted as though in a Turkish bath.

Of all the customers crowding this gastronomic Elysium, none wasted time on conversation. They were big negroes who satisfied great appetites to the accompaniment of great sound. There was no room in their mouths for words. Aunt Henrietta waddled between the kitchen and the eating-room, herself silent and streaming. Then there was a grand exodus; the gorged ones taking themselves to shade or sun—it mattered little which—to pass into splendid slumber until such time as the donkey engine screamed them back to picks and shovels and concrete-mixers for another half-day under that searing sun and in that saturated air, to bring the new con-

crete water-front another step nearer its finish.

At the height of the dinner hour a slender, coal-black negro whose eyes seemed all whites, strolled into the eating-room. He wore a suit of shepherd's plaid. His shoes were yellow and plumb. A gray derby clung to the back of his head. The shirt was a canary yellow, the tie a lurid red. He paused in the doorway and let his pop eyes race nervously, appraisingly, over the eaters assembled.

"Heyo, Potluck! How you come awn!" called a lanky, gingerbread negro in overalls, pausing between the two mouthfuls that worked the annihilation of a three-deep tier of waffles.

The newcomer merely glanced at the speaker. "Tol'ble, Boojum, jes' tol'ble," he replied, still looking over the room. Suddenly he took a quick step inside and bent over a tremendous black who was settling a heavy score with half a fried chicken. Potluck put a patronizing hand on the black's shoulder, a hand whose fingers were long, slender and tapering to fine points.

"Cris," he whispered, "mah han's sorter tremblin' dis mawnin'—how's yo's?"

The negro raised his oily face to Potluck's. "Talk plain, nigger! Ah doan'

speak yo' languidge. Doan' come fumblin' roun' me 'cep'n' you got business. Ah ain' got no time tuh be messin' wif no fancy niggers!"

"Hesh!" whispered Potluck, imploringly. "Doan' blab so much! Ah ain' axin' nuffin' 'cep' ef you wants ter try er li'e roun' wif de bones aftuh you gits through eatin'."

"Who—me!" shouted the negro, so loudly that every head turned to listen. "Yo' han' ain' trimblin' fuh me! Eve'y time Ah see yo' shadder Ah runs en' locks up mah money—dat's me! Try some o' dese ig'nant niggers frum de bayous. Dey doan' know you—Ah does!"

With deep disgust written all over his face, Potluck turned away. He was about to go back to the street when a voice hailed him.

"Aw, Hewitt!"

POTLUCK turned. Over in the corner at a tiny single table sat a most imposing figure. This negro was of tremendous bulk and of a shade to match Potluck's. He wore a frock coat with a napkin tucked under his chin. On a nail near-by hung a worn stovepipe hat. He beckoned to Potluck. And Potluck strolled lifelessly to the corner.

"Bring up er cheer, Hewitt," the frock-coated one invited. Potluck found an empty one and drew it to the tiny table. "Maybe you doan' ricollec' me, Hewitt; dis is Dr. Armstrong." Potluck nodded indifferently.

"How's luck dese days?" inquired the affable one.

"Luck ain' wid me," muttered Potluck, still searching the room with his gaze.

"Luck's er mighty po' pawdner, Hewitt; he totes er five-dolluh bill in his lef' han' en' er blackjack up his sleeve. De man whut goes pawdners wif luck gits de blackjack. You see de p'int, Hewitt?" Potluck looked bored and said nothing.

"En' jes' whin Ah see you step in heah jes' now," continued the philosophical Dr. Armstrong between mouthfuls, "Ah say ter myse'f, Ah say: 'Dyah's er man whut flirtin' wif de blackjack.' Luck ain' no good, Hewitt, 'cep' whin you git de bulge on him. By dat Ah mean you got ter be smarter den luck, else luck's g'wine down you."

"You's a mighty slick pusson whin hit comes ter trimmin' dese bayou niggers wif yo' cyard tricks, Hewitt, an' you plays

pretty safe. But you aint playin' safe. Luck's jes' teasin' you. De blackjack g'wine drap 'g'inst you' haid mighty soon. Den whah'll Potluck Hewitt be?"

"But den tek me—Ah doan' mess wif luck. You doan' need luck whin you got eddycashun." He rolled his eyes mysteriously. "Higher eddycashun at dat! Luck ain' no match fo' brains en' eddycashun. Now—" He broke off to roll his eyes ceilingward, raise his hand and sweep it through the air. He brought his hand to the table, slowly opened his fingers and with the bulky fingers of the other hand picked something from the open palm.

"See dis?" He exhibited a tiny insect. Potluck bent over and looked. "Jes' er gnat," he said gloomily. Then Dr. Armstrong chuckled. It was one of those chuckles made up of a blend of benevolent indulgence, pity and contempt.

"Dyah, you see! You plays luck. Ah plays higher eddycashun. You thinks—Ah knows! Jes' er gnat! Dat's whut *you* say. Science say Dr. Armstrong hol's in his han' de wing-ed enemy o' de human race—white 'n' black. Science say dis ain' no gnat. Science say dis is Ol' Man Stemonia!"

"Who?" queried Potluck.

Dr. Armstrong raised his voice. More heads turned in open-mouthed attention. "Ol' Man Stemonia. De only insect dat's able ter tek' yaller fevuh out'n de man whut's tu'ned yaller wif hit en' put hit in de blood of de man walkin' de streets an' holdin' han's wif luck an' sayin', 'Luck, Ah sho' is glad o' yo' comp'ny dis mawn-in!'"

TWO negroes across the room let their eyes roll. One of them nervously smacked the air as a fly buzzed close. Dr. Armstrong noted this.

"Ah bin up de rivuh er piece durin' de las' few days," went on the speaker, nervously slapping at something which must have been hovering close to his nose, "en dis Stemonia's in full fo'ce. Mules is dyin', cows is dyin'. En' jes' ez soon ez he git through foolin' roun' mules en' hawses en' cows, he g'wine light straight out fuh Ol' Mistuh Man! White folks got heaps o' sense, but hit took er nigger to clamp his eye on Ol' Man Stemonia fust—"

"Sho' nuff," interrupted Potluck, amid an impressive silence which filled the eating-room. "Ain' no yaller fevuh goin' 'bout now, is dey?"



Again Dr. Armstrong laughed. "Jes' wait—jes' wait, dat's all! Wait till 'bout two days. You goin' see folks drappin' out like flies in er cloud o' insec' powduh. White *en'* black! Dat is, all 'cep' dem whut got de sense ter come ter me."

"Come ter you!" repeated Potluck. "Man, you can't cure no yaller fevuh. Ain' nobody kin do dat!"

"Dyah go de man whut dun hitched onter luck fo' er side-pawdnuh! Cyarn't cure hit? Man, Ah kin stop hit befo' hit spreads ter two draps o' yo' blood!"

"How you do hit?" gaped Potluck. Dr. Armstrong reached up for his stovepipe hat. "Dat's tellin'. Dat's mah secrut, mah science. All Ah axes is ter git er chance at er man *befo'* dis Stemonia gits in his wuk, en' den dis insec' kin bore en' bore till his bill wears out. He cyarn't do nuffin' tuh *my* man!" With this, Dr. Armstrong settled his bill with Aunt Henrietta and walked out amid a tremendous silence. It was a fact worth recording that Potluck immediately left and went up the street dodging and slapping at the air. Also that the eaters finished in haste and did not repair to the shade for sleep. They, too, were dodging and slapping at every sound.

**H**IGH noon—mid-August high noon again. But only the flies broke the silence in the eating-room of Aunt Henrietta's. No other living thing was patronizing it. The street outside was deserted when it should have swarmed with blacks released from work. The water-front was deserted. One might have looked from a window in Aunt Henrietta's to the water-front and seen but two human beings braving the pelting sun. One was tall and lean and brown, in a linen suit; the other was short and heavy, in overalls. The short man was talking with his mouth and his hands. The other stood calmly and coolly listening. When the short man was through, Todd Roane, for it was Todd in the linen suit, lighted a cigar; very carefully he lighted it. It was his way when he put his brain to work on a problem.

"Well," he said finally, looking over the deserted clutter of concrete-mixers and trams and concrete forms, "I may be able to find out more about this thing by tomorrow. At least, I'll try. In the meantime, Casey, come in out of the sun and cool down. It's too hot to get excited."

Casey, red of face, released a blistering monosyllable. "Keep cool!" he shouted,

waving his arms. "An' all this work stopped—you know what that penalty is for stoppage on this contract? It's a thousand dollars a day. How many days will it take o' this to wipe out every cent profit, an' bankrupt me besides?"

"Don't forget," said Todd, his lean, coppery face breaking into a mirthless smile, "that your loss is mine. I've backed you on this contract to my last cent, Casey. If you go busted you can start again. I'm afraid it's too late for me to start over."

"I'll tell you," said Casey grimly, "I believe we can get some action out of the law on this. That Armstrong ought to be jailed!"

Todd shook his head. "You can't do it. He hasn't done anything illegal—"

"Hasn't?" exploded the infuriated contractor. "What did he do yesterday but go up to th' gravel bars an' talk yellow jack to those niggers till they were scared to death! Caught buffalo gnats for 'em an' swore they were yellow-jack mosquitoes! Every last one o' 'em quit last night an' hotfooted for Bat'n Rouge!"

"What's he do here in Bat'n Rouge but start that same talk among th' niggers on these works an' scare 'em into quittin'. Swears they're goin' to have yellow jack an' that he's th' only one that can cure 'em! If that aint illegal—"

Again Todd shook his head impatiently. "It's a fine point," he said. "That Armstrong is a crook, of course, but he has a license to practice medicine and he is licensed to sell drugs. I suppose business got slack and he hit upon this to stir things up a bit. He's always starting something. Isn't he the same one that made a pile a few years ago selling these negroes 'comet pills' to protect them when Halley's Comet was due to graze the earth?"

"Th' same one!" snorted Casey.

"Where have they all gone now?" suddenly asked Todd.

"'Cross th' river—over to Grand La-goan, where this Armstrong has his hang-out. They've been pourin' across all day. They tell me th' niggers from all the back country are hurryin' there too!"

"Some advertiser!" exclaimed Todd. "Take it easy; Casey; I'll nose about a bit. We'll put a crimp in this game, somehow."

"If we don't," added Casey, "we're crimped ourselves—good an' plenty!"

Straight to Aunt Henrietta's went Todd. Aunt Henrietta was standing in the door—

way, completely filling it, her arms akimbo on her bulging hips as she gazed with troubled eyes over the deserted water-front.

"Well, Aunt Henry," said Todd, pausing on the sidewalk, "business looks slack."

"Maw'nin' Cap'n Roane. Yassuh, niggers look lak dey quit eatin.' Whin dat happen, mos' ennything li'ble happen."

"Have you seen Potluck, Aunt Henry?" inquired Todd.

"Nawsuh, not since yestiddy. Dat Doctuh Awmstrawng wuz in heah en' he got dat fancy nigger so scairt o' 'skeeters he gawn en' hide hisse'f lak' er houn' whut tu'n ovuh er beehive."

"Aunt Henry, you don't believe all this talk about yellow-fever mosquitoes, do you?"

"Dey *aint* none!" exploded the big negress. She grabbed the air and caught something. "Heah 'tis—ain' nuffin' but buffalo gnats. Cap'n, whin Ah live up'n Red Rivuh parish, dese things uster come *eve'y* yeah. Kill hawses en' mules en' cows—but dey doan' mek no fevuh!"

"I wish you had told the rest. You don't know where Potluck is, you say?"

"Nawsuh, but he g'wine be easin' 'roun' heah pretty soon, Cap'n. He busted, en' dis de onliest place in town he got any credic—"

"Well, when he comes, tell him I want to see him, right away. Tell him to come to my room at the Saint James."

"Yassuh, ef he ain' drap daid wif' fright 'fo' he gits heah!"

THAT afternoon Potluck Hewitt knocked timidly on Todd Roane's door in the old Saint James. Todd opened it and when the humble Potluck entered, Todd closed the door and bolted it. Then he turned to Potluck.

"I hear you let that Dr. Armstrong make a fool of you, too," said Todd.

"How you mean, Cap'n Roane?"

"You know what I mean—about this yellow-fever scare. There isn't a *Stegomyia* in the Delta any more and there isn't any yellow fever. The country's full of buffalo gnats since the last high water and that's all there is to it."

"Cap'n," stammered Potluck, "dis Awmstrawng man say he got science. He done bin through higher eddycashun."

"Yes," said Todd. "He knows enough to make fools of the rest of you—that's what! Do you remember when the comet was near the earth?"

"Yassuh!"

"Do you remember that this Armstrong sold pills to the negroes to keep them from being hurt when the comet hit?"

Potluck scratched his head. "Wuz dat de same man, Cap'n?"

"The same man. You know he faked you then—he's doing it again." Potluck was silently thoughtful. Todd noted it.

"Now, I tell you what he's done this time. He's been up the river to the gravel bars where Casey is dredging gravel for this water-front job, and he's scared all the labor into quitting. Then he's been here in Baton Rouge and done the same thing. That's how he stirs up business. He's drawing all that labor to Grand Lagoon where he has his shop and he's selling them pills again—just as he did the other time.

"Now, I've put my money behind this water-front contract and I'm going to lose it if he keeps this labor scared away for many more days. If I lose my money, you wont have a white man in Louisiana to put up with your trifling and take care of you when you're broke. Do you know that?"

Potluck was looking solemn enough. "You's de onliest white man whut evuh he'ps me out'n er jam, Cap'n," he said. "You shuah bin mighty good ter me."

"All right, then," said Todd. "Now, it's up to you to look out for your own best interests. How much money have you got?"

Potluck shook his head very slowly. "Cap'n, Ah ain' got er two-bit piece ef Ah wuz g'wine be hung."

"Then here's your chance to make some in a hurry." Todd pulled a ten-dollar bill from his pocket. "Take this and go straight over to Grand Lagoon. Go to that man Armstrong just like the others are doing, get your prescription, buy your pills—and bring those pills back to me. Don't take a single one! Understand?"

Hungrily Potluck seized the greenback. "Yassuh," he answered. Todd pulled out his watch. "You've just got time enough to catch the *Istrouma* to Port Allen. Hurry, now! Get over there and come back. Come straight back to this room!"

Potluck glided from the room.

GRAND LAGOON lay close behind the great levee, a sleepy little town whose population was ninety-nine per cent as black as the gumbo soil about. This afternoon, however, it was blacker than ever, and no census enumerator would have rec-



ognized it. It swarmed blacks. Blacks from Baton Rouge and blacks from the inland; blacks from up and down the river. All of them gravitated to the corner shack on a street of shacks, where they stood in long, patiently shuffling line. They entered through a doorway, emerged as quickly from a side door, to fall hastily into another line, and when they entered and emerged from the shack the second time, they hurried away with a joyful humping of their shoulders as they strode.

Potluck had watched these things. When at last it came his turn in the line, he stepped up to the ramshackle desk at which sat Dr. Armstrong. The latter looked up and his face broke into a tremendous grin.

"Well, suh!" he exclaimed, "ef 'taint you. How's yo' side-pawdnuh luck dis evenin'? You ricolleck whut Ah say erbout higher eddycashun, yestiddy? Hewitt, how much you mek' since den?"

Potluck shook his head. "Ah ain' mek' nuffin', but Ah aint got no time tuh—"

"Wait—wait, man," remonstrated Dr. Armstrong. "You see dat line standin' out dyah? You see dat secon' line? Dey bin lak' dat since yestiddy. Dat's science!" He looked at Potluck and closed one eye slowly. It was the high sign of a brotherhood; Potluck caught the inference.

"Look heah, man!" He pulled open a desk drawer brimming with coins and greenbacks. Potluck's eyes seemed to start from his head. He looked at Dr. Armstrong in undisguised admiration.

"Easy money!" whispered the big negro. "Now you jes' watch how she wu'ks en' tell me ef science aint er bettuh side-pawdnuh den luck.

"Ah says ter you, jes' lak' Ah says ter all, 'Ev'nin' Mistuh Hewitt, whut kin Ah do fuh you dis ev'nin'?"

"En den you says, 'Doctuh, Ah's 'fraid o' yalluh fevuh. Kin you do som'pn fuh me?"

"En jes' lak' dis Ah writes yo' pr'scripshun—so!" He scribbled on the pad before him, tore off the sheet and handed it to Potluck. Potluck took it. It read:

"R Spts. Frumenti

DR. ARMSTRONG"

"Den you say," went on the playful scientist, "'Doctuh, whah kin Ah git dis filled?"

"En' den Ah say, 'Misto Hewitt, 'taint no druggis' in dese pahts whut kin fill dis

but Armstrong. Jes gimme two dolluhs, den git in dat secon' line out dyah en' wait yo' tu'n."

Already Potluck was proffering the ten-dollar note. He had his instructions. Dr. Armstrong made the change.

"Now, dat's de procedure in times o' er epidemic o' yalluh fevuh. But Ah's g'wine modify hit in yo' case so's you kin see er li'le mo' o' science. Jes' step in heah, Hewitt."

POTLUCK followed him into the back room, outside of which the second line was patiently waiting. A large barrel stood in the center of the floor. The rest of the room was filled with empty pint flasks. Dr. Armstrong picked up a great pitcher and a tin funnel. Into a dozen flasks he poured water until they were half full. Then he completely filled them from the spigot in the barrel. The room reeked with the odor of cheap whiskey.

"Heah's de pr'scripshun—five dolluhs mo', please." Dumb with amazement and no small amount of admiration, Potluck paid and pocketed the flask.

"Dat's de how!" beamed Dr. Armstrong benevolently, rubbing his fat palms. "'Lawngside o' science en' higher eddycashun, Hewitt, you is jes' er po' li'le piker!" Potluck swallowed in his dry throat, though the taunt had gone deep.

"Den dey ain' no yalluh fevuh?" he managed to ask.

Again Dr. Armstrong winked slyly. "Go lawng, man! Doan' ax no p'uffessional questions. De onliest thing," he whispered cautiously and anxiously, "Ah's 'bout ter run out o' lick. Whin dat's gawn, de game's up. Hewitt, you's a right smart man in yo' way, doan' you reck'n you could stir up er little bit o' dram fuh me in Bat'n Rouge. Ah'll pay you er mighty good price."

Potluck, who hadn't the slightest idea of the whereabouts of a drop, scratched his head. He never confessed ignorance about anything that promised anything worth while.

"Might," he said. "Ef Ah could, how Ah g'wine git hit ter you?"

"Ef you git holt o' *ennything*," whispered Dr. Armstrong, "see Lucas at Po't Allen. He got er jitney—he'll fetch hit. En' Lucas got er close mouf."

Potluck, deep in thought, left the shack as Dr. Armstrong returned to his desk. All the way back to Port Allen and while he

crossed the river to Baton Rouge he was thinking. He was still thinking when he knocked again on Todd Roane's door in the Saint James.

To the impatient Todd, Potluck told his tale from start to finish. Then he delivered the flask of whiskey. Todd drew the stopper, sniffed it, and made a wry face. "The cheapest of bootleg!" he muttered. "Well, I see his trick now. He merely started the talk about yellow fever to toll those negroes to his shack. Now, they're doing his advertising for him. I guess they'll stay away from work as long as *their* money and *his* liquor lasts!"

"Cap'n," said Potluck thoughtfully, "ain' de law agin' dat?"

Todd shook his head ruefully. "No, not yet. That's the trouble with this fool law. Any doctor can prescribe liquor in unlimited quantities. The Government ought to take a hand and limit the amount they can prescribe and make them give an accounting of each case. It's only a question of finding liquor enough, and a doctor crooked enough."

"Cap'n," said Potluck, blinking. "Ef Ah had er bar'l o' licker, Ah'd fix dis business fo' you."

Todd started. "You fool, do you think I'd send *more* liquor over there!"

"Doan' ax me too much, Cap'n, but ef you kin git me er bar'l o' licker by ternight, Cap'n, dem niggers g'wine back ter wu'k."

Todd looked at Potluck searchingly. He had seen this mind at work before—knew its sudden spasms of truly brilliant craftiness. Potluck had never failed him in a crisis, where he had had to deal with his own color. Todd had too much at stake to split hairs. But most of all he knew Potluck.

"Potluck," he said slowly, "I know you don't drink. That's one thing in your favor. And you've never tried to trick me yet. That's another thing. If I *should* get you a barrel of this stuff, when will those negroes come back to work?"

"Cap'n, Ah ain' mekin' no big promus, Cap'n, caws dis time Ah's dealin' wif science en' higher eddycashun. But, Cap'n, ef you'll trus' Potluck ter—"

"Where do you want this stuff sent, if I can get it?"

"Ter de back o' Aunt Henry's, Cap'n."

"All right," said Todd, picking up his hat from the table, "I'll see. And if whatever you do turns out right, there's a hundred dollars in it for you, understand?"

"Cap'n," chuckled Potluck, "Ah kin onderstan' dat wif mah eyes shet!"

THAT night there was a tremendous howdy-do in the rear of Aunt Henrietta's. Since ten o'clock, when a mysterious dray had deposited a weighty barrel within the rubbish-piled yard, Potluck and Boojum had labored by the light of a lantern. It was past one when Boojum went out and presently returned with another dray. They loaded the barrel and through the hot, black, sticky silence, drove it to the water-front. It took them half an hour to get it into the rowboat, and with both Potluck and Boojum straining at the oars, it took nearly an hour to cross to the Port Allen side against the mighty current of the Mississippi. Once across, Boojum climbed out of the boat and over the levee. Potluck waited. Half an hour later he heard the rattling din of a Ford. Boojum and Lucas came sliding down the levee. In another hour the barrel was in the rattletrap motor.

Well toward morning the three rattled up alongside the shack of Dr. Armstrong at Grand Lagoon. Potluck knocked loudly at the door.

Armstrong poked his head from the window like a great mud turtle. "Who dia?" he called.

"Sh-h-h!" warned Potluck. "Dis is Hewitt. Whah you want dat bar'l?" Instantly the black head was withdrawn. A light shone within. Out came Dr. Armstrong in flowing nightshirt.

"Right in de back room!" he whispered happily. "Hewitt, you shuah is one obtainin' man!"

When the precious barrel was within doors, Potluck turned to Boojum and Lucas. "You bofe wait out dyah fuh me in de cyah. Doctuh Awmstrawng en' me's got a li'le business." When they were alone, Potluck turned to the ebon-hued charlatan. "Doctuh, how much you g'wine pay me fuh dis dram?"

Armstrong shook his head cautiously. "Ah ain' buyin' no dram sight unseen. Lemme see whut hit's lak 'fo' we talks money."

Potluck looked around. "Got er hammer?"

Armstrong took a hatchet from a shelf and handed it to Potluck. Quickly the latter drove in the bung in the head. "Dip up some o' dat," he said. Armstrong did. He held the medicine glass, brimming full,



up to the light. He sniffed it. He tasted it gingerly. Then he gulped it down and smacked his lips. His eyes rolled.

"Oh, man!" Potluck was saying, "dat's white folks' lick. Dat's case goods in dat bar'l. Ain' none o' dat stuff you bin handin' out. Dat ain' no bootlaig, nur jump-steady—dat's gilt-edge lick!"

"How much you want fuh hit, Hewitt?"

Potluck fingered the corner of his eye as though it suddenly itched. "Doctuh, dat'll cos' you 'zackly two thousan' en' five hunn'erd dolluhs!"

Armstrong seemed to stagger and then right himself. "Man, you's crazy, tek' dat stuff erway! You wanta rob me heah in de night?"

"Ain' nobody robbin' nobody," retorted Potluck; "ef you doan' want hit, say so. Me'n' Boojum en' Lucas kin tek' hit back." He made as though to step to the door and call the two.

"Wait er minnit, wait er minnit!" snapped Armstrong in troubled voice. "All dis comes frum dealin' wif unedicated niggers! Hewitt, how in de name o' de Lawd you think Ah kin 'fo'd ter pay enny sech price fuh er bar'l o' lick?"

"Ain' you chawge two dolluhs fuh dem pr'scripshuns?"

"Sho'."

"Doan' you chawge five dolluhs fuh er pint o' dat cheap stuff?"

"Jes' so."

"En' aint eve'y pint half watuh?"

"Sh-h-h!"

"Den ef er bar'l o' lick's got fifty gal-luns, aint dey fo' hunn'erd real pints an' eight hunn'erd o' yo' pints in hit?" Armstrong was blinking his eyes stupidly and regarding Potluck with awe.

"So den, at five dolluhs er pint—fo' yo' pints—whut dat bar'l bring you? Fo' thousan' dolluhs! En den Ah ain' tek' no 'count o' de pr'scripshuns."

Armstrong passed a hand over his forehead.

"Tek' hit or no?" said Potluck finally.

"Hewitt, you's er hahd driver—you's—Ah, well, Ah 'spec' Ah'll have ter tek' hit. You come 'roun' termorrer—"

Potluck shook his head. "Pay me now, doctuh; one o' dem *stemonias* might knife me 'twixt now en' den."

Armstrong glared at Potluck's immobile countenance. He walked in his bare feet to the next room. Potluck heard the clinking of coins and the crick-cracking of bank-notes. When he returned, he had the

money in his hands. He counted it again, on the head of the barrel. Potluck stuffed it into his pockets and stepped out to the waiting flivver.

"Drive awn," he whispered to Lucas; "taint room fuh bof me en' dat doctuh awn de same side o' dis river!"

NO sooner had the sound of Lucas' flivver died out down the levee than Dr. Armstrong plugged the opening in the head of the barrel, drove in the bung near the lower end and fitted in the spigot from the empty barrel standing near. Then he began to pour water into empty flasks, only now he more than half filled them in view of the rare stock he had bargained for. When morning broke, shelf upon shelf stood filled with corked flasks of a beautiful amber color.

None too soon, for with the sun came the line. The negroes were coming back—and Dr. Armstrong knew they would come back as long as money and the liquor lasted.

When there were at least fifty anxious blacks in the second line waiting to have their prescriptions filled, Dr. Armstrong closed the front door, stepped back into the rear room and prepared for the second windfall. He felt tremendously jubilant. Really, this was the easiest money!

And then because he did feel so thoroughly satisfied with himself and the way of the world, he did something which seldom, if ever, he allowed himself to do. He took a glass and drew a generous portion of the liquor from the spigot. He held it up to the light, as he had done the night before. Again he smacked his lips, this time in anticipation. As he tossed it off Dr. Armstrong gave a vigorous imitation of a kangaroo caught unawares by the hounds. He cleared the entire length of the room in one thundering leap. Then he leaped back again. And then he spun in a circle, the while with mouth open like a red-lined cave. His great bulk suddenly performed the most intricate contortions; it twisted like a super-animated corkscrew. These amazing performances having spent themselves, Dr. Armstrong, his eyes popping and their whites shot red, bent forward and clasped his stomach with both fat hands as though he expected it to burst with deafening report. For a full minute he held the posture. His eyes were streaming, and he breathed in choking grunts. Finally he fought his way to a chair and collapsed.

Even in that moment of extreme agony, he realized that he had swallowed a most generous allowance of triple concentrated extract of tobacco. Simultaneously with the registering of this intelligence, he conquered his physical torment sufficiently to let his brain reel under the impact of the utter impossibility of such a thing. He himself, in this very room, a few hours ago had tasted that liquor from—"from the top of the barrel!" his stomach seemed to yell.

Armstrong staggered to his feet. He seized the hatchet and brought it down on the barrel head. It burst. The odor of high grade spirits filled the room. But he shoved his hand through the opening. It brought up hard against a false bottom.

Tricked! About a gallon of liquor between the head of that barrel and the false bottom. The other forty-nine gallons a distilled thunderbolt!

Outside, the line grew impatient. Some began to knock on the door. This alone brought Armstrong to his senses. In spite of his suffering, with the perspiration streaming from every pore, he thought quickly. He got up and examined the shelves. Yes, every empty flask had been filled with the stuff. He wished now he had not diluted it. There was only one thing to do. He did it. He opened the door.

"Gemm'en," he said weakly, bracing himself in the doorway, "dere's er new law bin passed. You can't tek' none o' dis med'cine awn de premisus. You gotter tek' hit outside de corp'rut limuts o' Grand Lagoon befo' you draws de stopper. Six months in jail ef you doan'. So ef you wants ter keep out o' jail en' evuh git enny mo' treatment frum me, min' whut Ah's said!"

Fast and furious he sold those flasks, stuffing the money into his frock-coat pockets. When the last one was gone, Armstrong slammed the door. Quickly he turned to the next room, opened the money drawer and frantically began to stuff its contents into a paper sack. Then with this under his arm, he went out to the front line.

"Back in er few minutes, boys!" he called over his shoulder as he hurried past them. "Jes' wait; Ah got ter git me er li'le snack."

When he was out of sight he ran. The stovepipe hat still hung on a nail over his desk.

It was the day following, and Todd Roane sat in his room. His knees were crossed and the tips of his fingers he was holding together. He sat studying the placid countenance of Potluck Hewitt, who stood near the door, his hat in his hand.

"Potluck," said Todd slowly. "Casey says the men are all back on the river-front and up on the gravel bars."

"Yassuh!" Potluck grinned.

"Also," continued Todd, "I have it pretty straight that Dr. Armstrong has left for parts unknown."

"Yassuh! Ah heah tell he run so fas' down de levee he sot de green grass awn fiah!" Again Potluck grinned.

But Todd's face was serious. "Now about this twenty-five hundred dollars you've given me for that liquor. You got that from Armstrong?"

"Yassuh, Cap'n," replied Potluck. But he began to fidget.

"For that liquor?"

"Er—yassuh."

"Then how does it happen that Boojum sold me back that same barrel this morning?"

Potluck's eyes rolled. He dropped the gray derby. "Ah'll tell you, Cap'n, Boojum got dat lick'er honus'. Ah give hit ter him ter sell ef he lak'd. Ah'll 'fess up, Cap'n, we wuz goin' fifty-fifty awn hit."

"But," cried Todd, jumping to his feet. "You told me you sold it to Armstrong!"

"Cap'n, dat ain' 'zackly de same lick'er. Troof is, Cap'n, yo' bar'l's jes' erbout two galluns sho't. Ef Boojum didn't tell you 'bout dat—"

Todd Roane looked at Potluck steadily. Then he looked away. "I'm perfectly willing to accept this twenty-five hundred if you got it from Armstrong, for he got it from my men and it will just about pay the penalty the city of Baton Rouge will collect from us for this delay in the work. And I'm perfectly willing for you to keep that hundred—you earned it. Also you're welcome to half of what I paid Boojum for that barrel I bought back. I'll now return it to a man in this town and get back what I paid *him* for it.

"All this is very simple, but what I want to know—"

"Cap'n," Potluck was grinning broadly, "hit's dis way. Dat Awmstrawng nigger say higher eddycashun do pay. Dat 'splains hit all. Hit *do* pay, Cap'n, en' Ah's sho goin' keep mal. eye peeled fuh some mo' niggers whut's got hit!"





## Tuan Franks' Holiday

H. Bedford Jones

**T**UAN FRANKS came to Zamboanga for his annual fortnight's holiday, to buy violin-strings and mingle with white people.

Franks lived down among the islands, had an ache in his heart for Virginia, and was a dry, sun-withered man whose eyes were clear and sparkling as gray rock-crystal. It was not for nothing that he was adviser to a native sultan. Franks knew a lot—a lot more than most people suspected; and he had that rare faculty of winning sheer guesses on which hang life and death.

Thus, before he had been two days in Zamboanga, he guessed that young Summers had been hooked in a raw game. No one knew about it, but Tuan Franks needed no diagrams; he heard some talk of Sabine d'Aiglon, and guessed the rest. There was no earthly reason for him to draw cards in that game, except that young Summers hailed from Virginia. That, for Tuan Franks, was reason enough.

One must, even reluctantly, glance at the whole affair from the viewpoint of Sing & Morcum. There was no such firm name in existence. Sing was a fat, oily Cantonese pawnbroker who dealt in money and other things. Morcum was a mustached, impeccable shipping man who maintained an office in the Calle Madrid. For many reasons, his private business with Sing was kept strictly *sub rosa*.

Morcum, who knew that Summers was about sucked dry, carried his new information to his silent partner.

"This man Franks—Tuan Franks, they call him—is at the club. Comes from Sibuko; no end of a *tuan* down that way, and money to burn. Looks to me like an easy mark."

Sing Toy blinked his fat and sleepy eyes like a tawny cat.

"No fool," he said dryly, "but a simpleton. There is a distinction."

Morcum nodded, a smile curling beneath his mustache.

"I expect so. From what I pick up, a sentimental lot—plays the fiddle. A remittance man of some kind, yet he seems to stand pretty well around here. What do you say to getting rid of Summers and taking a whirl at this chap?"

"Tuan Franks keeps away from women," said Sing Toy. "I know of him. I doubt if he would fall for Sabine at all."

"Sabine isn't a woman," said Morcum. "She's a devil."

Sing Toy nodded. "Well, let us feel out the matter," he responded cautiously.

**T**HE matter might have ended there, except that Morcum was at the country club this same night. A group of tourists on the veranda were discussing the Straits by moonlight; there was much loud talk and music. Morcum, drinking, was hand-

ing out the usual complaint about oil to a group of shipping men in the library.

"Coconut is the rottenest cargo in existence," he declaimed. "You have to figure on at least thirty per cent leakage—can't be shipped without leaking. The *John Fargo* is one of the best boats in water, and she lost forty per cent on her last San Francisco lading. The oil is bound to melt, and the barrels to leak."

"Perhaps the stowage is at fault," said a mild voice. Morcum glanced up to find Tuan Franks at his elbow. Some one introduced them. Morcum's predatory eyes devoured Franks and belied his smiling answer.

"Not at all," he said positively. "I'll gamble five thousand gold that no cargo of oil can be laid down without such leakage! Why, look at the—"

"Just a minute," said Franks. "I'll take the wager."

Morcum's jaw fell. Only for an instant, however. He was no fool, and knew his subject.

"Agreed," he returned. "Memorandum?"

"No," Franks smiled dryly and produced a check-book. "Post the money with the secretary here. I'll tell you how to stow the next cargo. If over ten per cent leaks, I lose."

"Done!" Morcum chuckled. A little crowd gathered around, shipping men most of them. The checks were written and posted. Then some one asked Franks if it were a secret.

"Not at all!" he said, a flash in his brilliant gray eyes. "How is the congealed oil stowed? Anywhere and everywhere, but always above the water-line. Naturally, it melts. If it is laid down in three tiers below the water-line, it wont melt. There's something for you shipping chaps to chew. Never thought of it, did you?"

"But it'll rot the bottom out of wooden ships!" protested some one. Franks chuckled.

"If it melts, certainly! But stowed right, it wont melt."

There was a thoughtful silence. Every shipping man present realized that something revolutionary had been discovered. But Tuan Franks, slipping off unobtrusively, left the club a step behind Summers, passed his arm under that of the younger man, and spoke cheerfully.

"Leaving so early, Summers? Come, walk over to the wireless station with me. I've a bit of good news for your ear."

"No good news can get that far," said the younger man morosely. Franks chuckled in his dry fashion.

"Excuse me for intruding on your private affairs, young man; but you're from Virginia, and I hate like the devil to see a Virginian get trimmed by a rotten crowd."

Summers flushed in the moonlight.

"I haven't hollered, have I?" he demanded heatedly and in some amazement.

"That's why," responded Franks. "I've been in the islands twenty years or so, old chap. Just reflect on that for a minute! If you hollered about your trimming, you'd have a libel suit and be wrecked. There are other ways. I had a little talk with Morcum tonight, and he gave me a check for five thousand to be returned to you; it's to be kept quiet. I'll leave the cash with you in the morning. You're stopping at the Mindanao?"

"Good Lord!" breathed Summers huskily. "Why, how—"

"Not a word!" Franks airily waved his stick. "Still, you could do me a big favor in return, if you would. I need a little information—confidential. Looks to me like storms ahead, and I like to have a rubber coat when it rains. Will you spill a few things?"

Summers, pretty well gone to pieces, talked for an hour as he might have talked to his own father. Franks advised him to catch the Manila boat on the following day, and Summers took the advice.

As for Morcum, he was very glad that Summers vanished so opportunely. It removed any possible embarrassment.

TUAN FRANKS had not, of course, collected Morcum's five thousand; but Morcum felt uneasily that it would be collected in due course. So did Sing Toy, who took steps to sell the coconut-oil information in other quarters and recoup. The affair, however, settled the fate of Franks.

"We'll trim him brown!" asserted Sing, an unholy gleam in his muddy eyes. "He's smart, but he's a simpleton. I have full reports on him."

You will no doubt recall having heard Sabine d'Aiglon spoken of in the islands. She did not move in official circles, but you must not hastily set her down as an undesirable citizen. Her misfortune was that she came of half-caste breed; yet she capitalized this misfortune to a magnificent extent.

She was probably the most beautiful



creature who has ever been seen in the islands—not merely a physical beauty, although her deep gold hair, her marvelous golden skin with that peculiar dusky richness that is the heritage of half-caste blood, and her slender golden body made a perfect unit of beauty. In Saigon, in Madrid, in Paris, she had created sensations. She was a musician of superb finish. Her mental attributes were astounding.

In Zamboanga, for example, she occupied a beautiful old Spanish villa near Ayala Beach, kept an expensive motor, and spent money freely. Cynics and puritans to the contrary, nothing is so gracious in the world's eye as the spending of money, unless it be the spending of brains. Sabine dispensed both. Her weekly salon was a revelation of taste and art, and to it came all those who dared, and many who should not have dared. Music, beauty and culture graced her board. Her position was secure, for there was nothing to be told against her.

She was not at all a harpy, a vampire, a crude laborer in the field of sex—not at all! True, there were men like Summers—but rarely. It was Morcum's greed and Summers' folly which had brought about any coarse work in this instance. Sabine d'Aiglon served Sing Toy in other ways, and had served him from Manila to Sydney; points of trade, items of shipping, even politics. It was Sabine who enabled Sing & Morcum to clean up a hundred thousand, for example, on the spectacular copra and oil famine during the war.

Tuan Franks found himself invited to the weekly salon, and attended. He came in a spirit of cynicism; he remained in one of awed incredulity, taken back to the days when he was a gentleman and revered women with a fine, high courtesy. When he made his adieux, the deep sapphire eyes of Sabine struck into him with a smiling camaraderie.

"I like you, Tuan Franks," she said. "Will you come again, in a day or two? It is pleasant to talk with one who is a gentleman—with one who can bow gracefully!"

An odd definition of gentility, no doubt; but Franks promised to call.

WHEN he came again, Sabine received him in the music-room—a dim, softly silent place where many hearts had broken. Upon the piano lay a violin in an open case. After a little Franks came to it—

Sabine was bringing a Bach fugue out of the piano as assuredly no one had ever before brought it out of that instrument. Franks looked at the violin, and an astounded cry broke from him.

"My Lord! Why, you have a Guarnerius here!"

She turned her head to smile slightly at him. "A violin, yes. It belonged to my brother—he was killed at Verdun. Do you play? If so, then play with me!"

She struck into a light waltz. Franks picked up the violin and examined it with awe in his eyes. How was he to know that it had come from the pawnshop of Sing Toy, who had bought it from a drunken sailor for three dollars?

Tuan Franks was not a pretty man. His white silks clung baggily about his withered frame. His face was golden brown, deeply tanned; his nose was red, with purpled veins. Above it his unspeakably brilliant gray eyes—as though all the energy and vitality of the body had flowed into those eyes! They changed color at times, but seldom. He looked what he was—adviser to a native ruler, a man who could not go back, and yet a man respected for what lay within himself.

"Not that much." He shook his head at the waltz. "Not for such a marvel as this, a violin of the master! It demands dignity."

"But me, I do not like dignity!" Sabine pouted, laughed a golden ripple, and struck a deep chord. "Did not Wagner invent ragtime, when he ragged the Preislied in his *Vorspiel*?"

"That is true," admitted Franks, cuddling the fiddle beneath his chin. "Come, then—the Prize-song!"

So they played together, and Franks loved the violin, and the heart in him ached to own it. The woman offered it to him as a gift—craftily enough, for Tuan Franks refused. But a day or two afterward she accepted a check and said she would turn over the money to a charity in Saigon. Sing Toy, later, tucked away the check for two thousand pesos and grunted with satisfaction.

Thus it came about that Franks greatly prolonged his holiday in Zamboanga, and was a caller almost daily at the villa near Ayala Beach. Also he left the violin there, using it only when he came, fiercely enjoying the music that greeted him; for in duets Sabine was superb, and as accompanist she was a marvel.

One afternoon Franks met Morcum on the street. Unfortunately for himself, Morcum had been at the liquor, and his brain-centers were a bit confused. He had the bad luck to invite Franks to invest in some copra deal. Franks let his gray eyes bore into Morcum for a moment.

"Invest?" said his dry voice. "Thanks, Morcum, but not with you. Summers invested with you, I believe."

Other people heard the remark, saw Franks turn on his heel. Morcum went livid with shame and fury, hailed a jinrikisha, and went straight to Sing's office. Almost incoherent with rage, he told Sing Toy what had passed.

"I want that chuckling devil done for!" he cried. "He knows too damned much!"

Sing Toy blinked his puffy eyes. "I agree with you, my friend."

"I want him—attended to!"

The Cantonese made a quiet gesture of assent. "Very well. Come back tomorrow morning, sober, and we will give Sabine the orders."

"You think she'll go the limit?" queried Morcum, a vicious passion at his lips. "I mean to finish Franks, I tell you!"

Sing Toy smiled meditatively. He took from his desk drawer a packet of letters, bound about with a cord of crimson silk.

"You remember the assassination of the governor general of Indo-China a couple of years ago? Well, that is all. If Sabine is not a good girl, the French will be glad to send her to Noumea. So she will be a good girl, and do what I say. The only question is whether Tuan Franks can be caught by her."

"Caught?" Morcum laughed harshly. "He's caught already!"

Sing Toy made no response. He was a very cautious man.

**TUAN FRANKS** really did enjoy finding himself *en famille* with Sabine d'Aiglon.

This is a rather delicate subject, and you must not misunderstand the friendship. On the part of Franks, it was purely intellectual. He called every evening at the villa, and attained a degree of intimacy for which many men would have bartered their souls; yet his perfect courtesy never unbent an iota.

This puzzled Sabine, interested her, set her to studying the man. Always there was music, music; Tuan Franks saturated himself with it after long deprivation. He

made the Guarnerius sing to her, but the song was of broken days and lost hopes, never of throbbing love and passion. To her the man seemed cold, and this Sabine d'Aiglon could not comprehend fully.

Gradually it dawned upon her that the man held a terrifically tight rein upon himself. He had returned to the days when he was a gentleman, and this spirit ruled him absolutely, guarded him; his sense of idealism, of chivalric courtesy, was instinctive. He was blind to nothing in the world; he might be tempted to sin—certainly! At close quarters with himself, however, the temptation lost force. His attitude, queerly, was not unlike that of a convent-bred girl.

Now, for Sabine d'Aiglon to encounter—in the line of duty—such a man as this, was something more than a novelty: it was a calamity. Tuan Franks was no beauty, no ardent young spark; yet she chose to break and win him. With the perversity of her kind she desired to conquer him. This, simply, was because she appreciated the fine things in him.

Her interest grew with each meeting, with each impact of her own personality against that blank wall of charming courtesy. That he enjoyed her society, gave freely of himself, was evident; but the unfathomable quality in him took an ever stronger hold upon the woman. She was not vicious, you comprehend; she had great qualities—misdirected.

Then, one evening, she undertook in a mad moment to warn him against Morcum. She did it subtly, cleverly. For an instant she thought he had not understood. Then he smiled.

"Dear madame, I appreciate your words," he answered. "But, please comprehend, I am not at all hoodwinked—not at all. Mr. Summers was my very good friend, you see? So now, *au revoir*, charming one! May I say *à lendemain*?"

He bowed over her fingers and was gone.

**IT** was a long moment before she recovered from the electric shock of his words. The revelation of Franks' depth astounded her, swept her from her feet. She sank into a chair, staring at nothing. Summers—his friend! Oh, fool that she had been, fools that they all were, to tamper with such a man as this! Could he know how Summers had been betrayed and rooked? Could he know her share in that business?

"*Mon Dieu, what a man!*" she breathed



through lovely parted lips. "What a man! Shall I warn Morcum and Sing?"

Morcum! At the name, her lip curled. She caught sight of herself in a pier-glass, and rose. She saw what an unutterably lovely thing she was, what an exquisite thing, beyond words!

"Very well," she said, a flame in her eyes. "Such a man can fight Sing Toy—and beat him! Then we go to Sibuko together, and forget the world."

Upon the morrow she was commanded to the shop of Sing Toy. She went.

In the cluttered little shop where the Cantonese squatted among his affairs like a fat yellow spider, she stood and received her orders. Morcum was there. Among the three no words were wasted; it was plain speaking.

"Tomorrow night—finish it," concluded Sing Toy. "The main thing is to get the check for twenty thousand dollars. He can give that much, at least."

"Bah!" Sabine uttered a scornful word. "The man is no fool! And—"

"Wait!" Sing Toy smiled. "It is to be a loan—you know the old story. Offer to sign papers, anything. Then come from your villa to the city, by boat, with him. I have arranged for a fine mahogany launch. You will have a nice ride. We will take care of Tuan Franks and the papers you sign. The check will be cashed in the morning. Franks will vanish. That is all. You understand?"

She listened, with a nod. Here she perceived that it was not a question of money only, but of life. That was Morcum's work, of course. Sing Toy was too wise to afford veiances.

"I will be waiting in the launch," added Morcum, smiling thinly. "Will you get the check? Can you do it?"

Sabine nodded and departed. She knew that Sing Toy held the whip-hand over her, while he held those papers. She had no ambition to go to the French penal colony on Noumea. So, her only hope was to find the man who could conquer Sing Toy—and she had found him.

WHEN Tuan Franks called at the villa on the following evening, he encountered for the first time a seductive hint in the d'Aiglou. It was only a hint, a touch of personal warmth in the greeting. He was in evening dress, as always. It was typical of the man—and significant—that he so played at being a gentleman.

Sabine had never been so lovely; and perhaps it warned him. Also there was no music laid out upon the piano. She told him that she must leave early, that she would take him back to town by boat. And he assented to this.

Something in his manner affected her strangely, made her wonder if he could know more than appeared. But in his presence all her fright of Sing Toy lessened and waned to nothing. That memory fled out of her, and all the veneer cracked, so that the woman below came suddenly to the surface.

She turned to Franks, and tears were brimming at her eyes.

"Tell me!" she said abruptly. "Am I—do you think I am not—a good woman?"

Franks was profoundly startled. He had not expected this evident sincerity.

"Dear madame, you are the most beautiful woman I ever saw! And I think you are good."

Her eyes devoured him mistily, ignoring his frankness. "If you will take me to Sibuko, I will go. But first you must help me. I—there is trouble here."

Tuan Franks put out one hand and thoughtfully closed the case of the Guarnerius. It was a pregnant and symbolic action, could she have guessed it—as though more than the violin case were being closed. Yet she did not observe it.

Had Franks betrayed the least sign of yielding, she meant to tell him everything, expose the plot to take his life that night, and clinch passion with gratitude. But Franks did not give the sign. His courtesy had never been so exquisite, so perfectly balanced. Slowly the fact was driven home to her brain that this man rejected her absolutely. Tuan Franks was very gentle about it, but he was undeniably firm.

"You have hinted that you are in trouble," he concluded. "I will do anything in my power for you, dear madame. Please believe that!"

The tears came. They were real tears, and shame took hold upon her, so that she fled from the room. Anger and shame gripped her, mastered her. Presently she came back, and there was a sad, shadowy smile upon her lips. Franks had let her down hard, as she saw it; now she would play the game.

SHE told him about needing the money, and there was much truth in her story—about the letters that Sing Toy held, for

instance. She had scarcely expected Franks to believe her, and yet she read belief in his eyes. There was about her nothing of the tigress, the woman scorned. She knew the cards perfectly, and a better man than Tuan Franks would have lost that game.

Franks heard her out, listening gravely. He produced his check-book and wrote out a check for twenty thousand pesos, gold. He handed her the check, and silently accepted the acknowledgment she insisted upon writing. Then, the matter of the loan ended, he made the prosaic observation that they had better start for town. He took up the Guarnerius as he spoke, and she knew that he would come no more. He assented to this gravely.

"My holiday is ended, dear madame," he said. "In a day or so I must go to Sibuko."

At the door Sabine made one last effort, but Tuan Franks seemed not to understand her veiled allusion. She drew the gorgeous yellow cloak about her shoulders and led the way through the gardens to the boat-house and landing. Franks followed, and uttered some polite comment upon the beauty of the moonlight.

At this, she could have struck him down herself. Her heart hardened beyond recall.

They came down to the landing, where a long and glistening launch rocked to the swell. Sabine d'Aiglon looked for Morcum, in vain. Half of the boat was in bright moonlight, half in the black shadow of the after-awning. Trim white-clad figures held the lines.

Tuan Franks handed her aboard, and she took a chair forward of the awning. She pictured Morcum falling suddenly upon Franks, the black shadows vomiting yellow men to overwhelm him.

"Hello, here are drinks! Thoughtful crowd," said Franks.

A boy appeared before them, bearing a tray. So, they meant to drug Franks first! That was like Morcum, to take no chances. Sabine d'Aiglon smiled as she took the cup presented to her, and she smiled again, cruelly, as Tuan Franks tossed off the drink. She sipped more slowly at hers, the pungent odor of limes in her nostrils. Then she drank, and leaned back.

The boat's engine purred; the boat slipped away from the landing. Away from them dropped the coral beach where the phosphorescent waves came tumbling up from the Sulu Sea; out in the channel the islands were black dots; up above, on the

mesa, the country club and wireless station glistened with lights. The launch slithered through the glittering waters. Presently Sabine attempted to speak, but her voice would not come. The crystal cup fell from her hand and tinkled on the deck.

Tuan Franks, watching her, smiled slightly.

SOMETIME later the launch swept past the end of the government wharf and headed for the Chinese pier. Tuan Franks said a word in Malay to the boatmen, who pulled from the shadows of the awning a shapeless bulk which they opened up—to disclose the figure of a man. It was Morcum, bound hand and foot, wrapped in matting.

"Well," said Franks pleasantly, "you and your Chink friends overlooked a bet or two, Morcum. I know a lot more than you gave me credit for. And I have some good Malay friends, as you have learned to-night."

Morcum did not answer. He was gagged. Franks turned to his Malays.

"Place the lady beneath the awning, and put this man there also. Await my return."

Franks put down the violin carefully, and then left the boat.

First he telephoned the shop of Sing Toy, and found that Sing was there and would receive him. Ten minutes later Tuan Franks stood before the fat, oily Cantonese—who blinked at him. Franks smiled as he had smiled at Morcum.

"Never mind explanations, Sing," he said quietly. "The point is, I win the game. Now, I will balance all our accounts and call them square, if you will turn over to me the letters which you hold regarding Madame d'Aiglon. Otherwise—"

He cocked his head to one side, and his bright, glittering eyes dwelt upon Sing Toy with a speculative air.

As for Sing, that astute Cantonese knew the futility of fighting for what is not worth the fight. He wisely concluded that Sabine d'Aiglon was of no further use to him. From his desk he took a packet of letters bound with a cord of crimson silk.

"I am glad our accounts will be closed," he said blandly.

"Thank you—for the compliment!" Franks bowed, and departed.

When he returned to the launch, Franks stood on the deserted landing and directed a few words to his Malays who awaited



him. A moment later Morcum came up the steps, rubbing at his wrists. Franks, very pleasantly, took his arm and invited him to a walk.

The two walked off together, Morcum speechless, frightened, sullen. They paced in silence to the corner of the Calle Madrid. There, in front of a letter-box, Tuan Franks halted his companion and held up the packet of letters Sing Toy had given him.

"I just obtained these from Sing Toy," he said. He put them in his pocket, and then showed Morcum a single letter, stamped. He tapped this on the letter-box.

"Now," he said crisply, "your game is up, Morcum—done with for good! I got a full confession out of the lady; that's how I was able to forestall you. Sing Toy verified it. I intend to have just as much mercy on you as you had on Summers and the other poor devils you rooked. Understand? Here is the complete story of this affair. When it is made public, your goose is cooked in the islands; the story will follow you everywhere—and I intend to make it public."

"Wait!" croaked Morcum. Under the street lights his face was ghastly. "If it's money—"

"I'm no blackmailer. Thanks." As he spoke, Tuan Franks slipped the letter into the box. "There it goes. You'll read the full account in the *Herald* tomorrow. Now run along home and reflect on your sins."

Morcum staggered slightly, then walked away. Tuan Franks looked after him, a queer smile upon his lips, and turned back toward the Chinese pier.

"He's just fool enough to think," murmured Franks, "that I'd be fool enough to give the affair to the newspapers! Well, so much the worse—for him." . . .

Sabine D'Aiglon wakened to surroundings which were at once unfamiliar—yet vaguely familiar. The pulsating throb of

engines pierced her brain. The round port, the neat stateroom, the whirring fan—one of the Straits steamers, beyond a doubt!

Fright entered into her and became panic. She sat up, to realize that she was alone, sleep-drugged, still clad in her gorgeous attire, the yellow cloak about her shoulders. Her eyes widened as a chatter of talk reached her from the deck outside—it was sunset of another day! How long had she slept? Who had drugged her? What had happened?

The answer came in a crinkle of paper as her hands moved. She looked down to her lap, and opened the folded sheet—read:

Dear Madam:

I would advise that you continue aboard ship to Singapore, at least. You will find your money and personal belongings in the suitcases placed in your stateroom. Your other effects will follow by the next boat.

I owe you great thanks for many charming evenings, and for a beautiful Guarnerius, which I shall always cherish in your memory. Accept my high esteem and compliments. Also the enclosed package, in remembrance of

TUAN FRANKS.

She found herself staring down at letters bound with a cord of crimson silk. . . .

At nearly the same hour, but far back in Zamboanga, the oily Sing Toy was reading in the paper an account of the mysterious suicide of Morcum, for reasons unknown. Sing Toy read the account with interest. He did not know the reasons either, but he could guess. Presently he laid the paper down and reached for his long bamboo pipe.

"I am glad that Tuan Franks has departed for Sibuko," he reflected. "And I am also glad that the accounts between us are not to remain open. I was never quite certain about that man—but I am certain now. I think that I came out lucky."

And complacently he lighted his bamboo pipe.

"**V**OODOO," a fascinating novelette dealing with an American's adventures in darkest Haiti, will be a feature of our next issue. William Almon Wolf wrote it, and it's an unusually good story. Watch for it.

# One Too Many Jones

A Drama of the  
West when It  
Was Wild.



By  
Frederick R. Bechdolt

SOMEHOW the talk drifted to gambling.

There were five of us sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, and four were old-timers. Shadowed by the wooden awning which reached from the building front to the gutter, they were visible only as vague gray shapes; and as their disembodied voices floated out from the concealing shades upon the placid Arizona evening air, Chiracahua's wide main street—deserted during this hour which the twentieth century generation devoted to attendance at the corner moving-picture theater—became peopled by the imaginary throngs which their tales conjured. There were times now when the men of the roaring eighties seemed to be crowding that roadway which the hoofs of their ponies had beaten smooth and hard for the automobile traffic of the present day—times when one seemed to hear the clicking of celluloid chips between the long fingers of the dealers, the drone of croupiers' voices, the rattle of the marbles on the slowing roulette wheels. At one of these periods a huge bronze car came purring down the street. It stopped in front of us; we all looked up.

The car's only occupant leaned forth from the driver's seat and addressed Chiracahua's bank president by his first name.

The light from the corner arc-lamp fell upon him, making the scarab in his tie glisten, revealing his masterful face—such a face as you may see in one of those downtown New York offices wherein the destinies of large industries are shaped. I recalled it from a meeting in a Tucson club, and I was not surprised to see it here, for the Colonel's interests were far flung as the arid mountain ranges of the great Southwest.

"Been down to Canaanea, Charley," he announced, "and I've looked over those properties that we were talking about the other day." As he went on to speak of certain mines and certain Mexican generals upon whose whims ore-shipments were at the time depending, his eyes roved among the shadows. When he had picked out the faces which were mantled by the semi-darkness, his own face lightened, and he broke off abruptly with the profane demand:

"What are you fellows doing out this time of night?"

The Cattleman was answering with slow badinage when the Judge, who administered the commonwealth's laws in quiet dignity by day but had forgotten all about that dignity and those entangled statutes tonight, interrupted.

"Bill," said he, and the omission of that



title by which the newcomer passed wherever I had heard him addressed or mentioned was something for one to notice, "what was the name of that short-card man that they ran out of the camp in seventy-nine?"

There followed a moment during which I heard the gears click home, and the great car purred past us to stop according to the law's demands against the curb; the Colonel climbed forth and took his place among us.

"That," he answered quietly, "was One Too Many Jones." The shadows took him unto themselves, and now, as his voice drifted out from them, the moving-picture theater began disgorging its audience. Motors drummed, and autos passed us homeward bound. The soft laughter of women floated between walls which had echoed to the roaring of forty-five revolvers not so many years ago. The crowd passed on. Save for the tinkling of glasses at the soda fountain in the drugstore down at the other corner, the street was lapsing to its nocturnal silence.

"I wasn't here that year," the Colonel went on, "but I'm pretty sure that he's the man you mean—a fattish fellow with a greasy face and bad, cold, shifting gray eyes."

The Judge swore softly. "That's the man," he said. "He tried to deal an ace off of the bottom to the town marshal."

The Cattleman cried aloud with the joy of recurring memories; and he added blithely: "He stole my hoss from the O. K. corral the evenin' when they ran him out."

The Colonel sighed. "If I knew where that fellow was buried, I believe I'd go to his grave and build a monument; and on it I'd write—but let me tell you of his career in Arizona after you fellows saw the last of him—and how he wound it up." He paused briefly, and I got a glimpse of light-colored dresses where a group of girls was passing homeward from the corner drugstore. The street became empty again except for ourselves, and now the Colonel addressed me.

"This One Too Many Jones," he explained, "was a short-card man who'd never taken a chance in his whole life, but had played for a sure thing in every game he sat in. He'd come from Dodge City with the first rush to the mines, and it didn't take Chiracahua long to see that he was too raw for this camp—which was pretty raw

when you come to think of it; so they ran him out, as we were saying."

His preface ended, the Colonel halted long enough to beg the makings from the Cattleman, after which he rolled his cigarette, lighted it, and embarked upon his tale.

**I**N those days a man could do a heap of wandering and not travel more miles than he'd cover in a few hours with a car at the present time. All you had to do was to cross a range of mountains, come out into the next valley, and there you were in a different country, among new people, ready to begin all over again. If you were short in Tombstone or in Chiracahua, you'd go over to the San Simon instead of taking a steamer for Honduras; and if it was a hanging matter, you'd just shove on as far as the Pecos. That was the way with One Too Many Jones. He'd cheated so many men and he'd done it so poorly that the camps he'd lived in had gotten too small for him; and so, when they ran him out of this one, he annexed Bill Hutton's pony, as Bill has told you, and just naturally vanished beyond the skyline.

The next that was heard of him was around Springerville; and there he made up his mind to try a new line of easy-money getting. Top and bottom dealing was too full of excitement and didn't pan out well enough when it came to getting a bank-roll. So now he went in for hoss-racing. Somehow or other he'd managed to get hold of a good animal which could run a quarter in mighty fast time, and—what was even better—didn't look like he could run at all. He cleaned up a few bets with this sorrel pony from cowpunchers who were coming from Texas with the first trail-herds, and he wandered on into the Navajo country up by the Painted Desert. Now the Navajos were sharks at hoss-stealing and racing and they'd bet the blankets off of their backs when they had a pony that looked good to them, which was the case when One Too Many Jones showed up.

Not to take too long in telling it, One Too Many got action for his money and staked his sorrel against a basketful of silver bracelets before he'd been on the reservation half a day. That afternoon the race was run. The course was a straight stretch, a quarter of a mile or so, and two stakes to mark the finish line. First man to rise between 'em was winner. One Too

Many noticed a bunch of squaws sitting beside one of those stakes, but he didn't think anything about it; he was too busy watching the pinto which his sorrel had to beat. So the squaws stayed there, all huddled in their blankets, while he trotted his bronco up the track to where the starters were waiting.

There was the usual jockeying between him and the buck who was riding the pinto, and then they were off, neck and neck. One Too Many's pony took the lead and held it without a bit of trouble from that time on. Nothing to it—the pinto never had a living show; and as the sorrel ran down toward the finish, One Too Many began figuring on the amount of his winnings—about sixteen hundred dollars, he reckoned it, if the bracelets would bring as much as half their weight in silver. It sure looked like prosperity was coming his way. Four or five strides more, and he'd be crossing the line.

Just then every one of those squaws jumped to her feet at the same time and let out a loud yell, flapping her colored blanket with both arms.

When One Too Many managed to pull up that scared sorrel and get his bearings, he found himself a hundred yards off to one side of the course; and by the time he had gotten back on the track, the buck that rode the pinto was gathering up the blanket the bets had been spread out on. The tin-horn had sense enough to know just how much good it would do him to claim a foul; and he only waited around long enough to steal a wall-eyed pony while the Indians were celebrating that night, before he left the country.

**THIS** cured him of hoss-racing, and he went back south in a bull outfit, working his way by doing odd jobs for the wagon master, until he got as far as Fort Huachuca, with a few dollars in his pocket which he had picked up by hook and crook along the road. There he ran across a half-breed Cherokee by the name of Brazos Tommy who'd had to hurry out West from his own country, and the two of 'em went to renegade trading.

The way they worked it was this: they built a little shack just outside the military reservation and sold mescal, which they smuggled across the line, to the soldiers. Now, Uncle Sam wasn't paying his cavalymen very high wages back in the seventies and eighties, and the troopers

were broke most of the time. But One Too Many and Brazos Tommy were willing to take pay for their liquor in cartridges, and cartridges were easy enough to steal. They'd run their little deadfall for a few weeks and pile up a few bushels of ammunition, and then they'd disappear.

In those days the San Carlos Apaches used to make a practice of leaving the reservation every so often and going on a tear. They'd raid down through the Sulphur Springs valley or the San Simon, killing off a few prospectors and cowpunchers and scooping up what plunder they could lay their hands on. And by the time the cavalry got hot on their trail, they'd have enough grub to take to the mountains and travel on down across the line into Mexico, where they would hang out in the Sierra Madre, holding off the Mex soldiers and robbing the greasers and raising hell in general as long as they could make their ammunition last.

Now, One Too Many and Brazos Tommy always timed their little *pasears* from Fort Huachuca according to these raids; and the two of 'em would fetch up down in Sonora just about when the Indians were getting short of powder. Old Geronimo and Victorio knew every foot of the Sierra Madre and had some dry placers, where they would set the squaws to work. Trading cartridges—which had been bought for smuggled mescal—and getting gold-dust in exchange was what you might call a profitable business. But there were so few white men along the border in those days that anybody's movements were pretty sure to be noticed sooner or later; and one fine evening when One Too Many was coming home, he found the shack in ashes and Brazos Tommy hanging to a cottonwood limb. There were a few troopers sort of waiting around the place looking for him to happen along, but he wheeled his hoss in time to get a good fair start of 'em and held his lead down into the San Pedro Valley. And so he got over across the Dragoons and arrived in Galeyville, ready to begin again.

He was cured of Indian trading, all right, the same as he'd been cured of hoss-racing and of short-card gambling; but he wasn't cured of hunting for a sure thing. He'd no sooner hit Galeyville than he started looking around for easy money, and he was pretty keen about it too, because it was a cinch that the news of the last scrape was bound to reach the camp pretty quick;



and although the bulk of Galeysville's solid citizens were making their money by cattle-rustling and holding up the stage, One Too Many knew they wouldn't stand for his recent record. He'd simply got to get hold of a stake and fade away.

THE Colonel paused.

"Galeysville!" the Cattleman said softly. "She sure was some little town while she lasted. I've seen lively times in Galeysville."

"I drove through the place the other day," the Banker told us, "and there wasn't as much as a 'dobe wall there, to show there'd been a town. Let me see—when was it that the Apaches burned it? Back in eighty-three, if I'm not mistaken, wasn't it? That was old Geronimo. I'd clean forgotten Galeysville till I went by and saw the mesquite growing where the buildings used to be. But I can remember when the smelter was running and men thought the mines would turn out to be a second Tombstone—and the outlaws spending their money in the saloons! Times were good while they lasted."

A homebound Ford squawked, scuttling down the side street, and I had a glimpse of a covey of children nesting around their mother in the back seat. The lights went out in the corner drugstore. A match flared, and I saw the Colonel's face in the glare of the tiny flame as he lighted another cigarette; there was—or seemed to be—a tenderness of expression in those masterful features which I had never seen there before, as if perhaps he were thinking back on some subject which awakened youthful memories. He threw the match aside and went on with his tale.

THE night when One Too Many hit Galeysville, a stranger came to the camp. Now, some men say there isn't any such thing as luck and they'd call it a coincidence—which is only another name, after all—that this was the newest, most trusting young tenderfoot who'd gotten as far as the territory of Arizona up to that time. And I'm here to tell you that the only reason he had managed to travel the distance in company with his bank-roll was because he'd made a through trip of it all the way from St. Louis, and hadn't gotten off the train or stage west of the State of Missouri long enough for any of the inhabitants to have a word with him. He was looking for a chance to invest his money in

some good mining property and had the cash with him—fifteen thousand dollars in bills.

One Too Many Jones was heading into the Occidental saloon, keeping one eye open for familiar faces that he wanted to avoid and the other eye open for familiar faces whose owners might be induced to stake him to the price of a meal, when he ran up against this stranger. He got a good look, took in the Tenderfoot's points, and clasped him by the hand. It seemed too good to be true when he listened to the boy's story in front of the bar. You men know how it was in Arizona then, when selling fake mines was the popular outdoor sport and anybody from east of the Mississippi was regarded as meat for the natives. If you wanted to keep your stranger, you wanted to act mighty quick, or some other fellow would have him hooked while you were turning your back.

One Too Many thought of how the territory of Arizona was getting too small for him and he stuck to his young friend like grim death. You fellows can imagine for yourselves how he managed to instill suspicion of everybody else and how he talked himself up as the only honest man in this part of the country, and when the proper time came, let it drop that he had some good claims which were only needing a few thousand dollars to make them astonish the world. Also I might mention that he managed to beg, borrow or steal some silver-ore samples from a jerkwater assayer who had an office down the street.

Before midnight Jones had the Tenderfoot all organized and hot for the journey to these fake properties, which were somewhere up in the Grahams about three days by saddle-hoss out of Galeysville. By sunup they'd bought—that is to say the boy had furnished the money, and One Too Many had done the picking—an outfit: pack-mule, ponies, blankets and grub; and the morning hadn't fairly gotten started, before they were hitting the trail.

They'd been out two hours or so when they ran into a wagon outfit that was traveling their way, and it happened that Whisky Bill, who'd been wagonmaster in the bull-train which had taken One Too Many to Fort Huachuca, was in charge. Not having been down on the San Pedro lately, this old-timer didn't know anything about the Indian trading affair, and so he stood for the prospector's throwing in with his party. In those days, of course, no-

body traveled far alone if he could find company, and while wagons were slow, a bunch of teamsters was always looked on as being mighty good people on account of their being used to Indian fighting and well heeled with rifles and ammunition.

WELL, things went quietly enough that day—nothing to do but curse the dust and keep close to the wagons and wonder why a man should be such a fool as to come out West instead of staying back East where he could get his three meals a day and belly up to a bar whenever he got thirsty. Such things as that to talk about, and of course the chances of running into Indians, all of which got blamed tiresome early in the day. The teamsters had their two companions sized up, and all of 'em knew One Too Many Jones well enough to understand just what sort of a deal was taking him out into the mountains with a blond-haired, fresh-cheeked boy who wore brand-new boots and sombrero and didn't savvy any more about handling a pony than they did about playing croquet.

But nobody said what he thought or tried to give the Tenderfoot advice. Mind-ing your own business was a thing that men got down to a science in southeastern Arizona during the early eighties, because if anybody wanted to get nosey over another man's affairs, he had to be sure and organize himself first so's to be in shape to fight for the privilege. So the teamsters kept their mouths shut on the subject of silver mines and sure-thing men, and swore at the mules just the same as usual, while One Too Many filled the Tenderfoot up with lies about his knowledge of the country and the Indians he'd killed; and all there was to listen to was the creak and rattle of the wagons and the scuff of the mules' hoofs in the dust and One Too Many telling what a hell of a fine man he was, until they rolled up in their blankets and went to sleep that night.

The next morning just before sunup they woke up mighty brisk. The Apaches had jumped 'em, and the air was full of bullets and yells. The Indians had put bits of brush in their turbans and covered their heads with dirt until a man couldn't tell one of them if he saw him lying in the mesquite fifty yards away from him, and they'd managed to crawl in on their bellies and kill the night herder. Now they were trying to stampede the mules and

murder the rest of the party for good measure.

Well, as I've said, the teamsters were old hands, and this Apache fighting was all in the day's work; they rolled out of their blankets, clawing for their rifles, and inside of a very few seconds they were pumping lead as industriously as the renegades, and a heap more accurately, for barring the Yaquis down in Mexico, there never was an Indian who knew how to pull down his sights. Five minutes or so later, Whisky Bill, whose turn it was to cook breakfast, was kindling up a fire and mixing flapjack batter while the rest of the bunch—excepting One Too Many—were shooting on all sides of him, and the Apaches were beginning to draw off toward the hills.

I said excepting One Too Many. When the teamsters had scalped two good Indians that they'd got and had scooped out a grave for the night herder, somebody saw a pair of boots sticking from the back of a covered wagon, and they pulled One Too Many forth to have breakfast with the rest of 'em. The Tenderfoot was still blazing away at the Arizona landscape and came in too late to notice how his pardner had holed up at the first sign of trouble.

THAT morning when he was hitching up the mules, Whisky Bill called One Too Many over to the wagon and had a little talk with him.

"The trouble with yo'-all," says Whisky Bill, "is this: yo're always lookin' for the sure thing, and yo're plumb scared to take a gambler's chance. Yo' can't ever make money that-a-way, One Too Many. The only thing it ever gets yo' is hard luck. Just when yo're in line to make a stake, yo' go to work and spile things by playin' both ends against the middle, and somebody ketches yo' at it. Look at what yo'-all done this mo'nin'! Here yo' was all organized to skin this tenderfoot out of his bank-roll, and yo' start in to toss away yo'r opportunities by lettin' him see what kind of a fake yo' be—which he'd of seen and quit yo'-all cold, only fer him bein' so busy tryin' to make a Fo'th of July celebration out there in the mesquite. No sir. You'll sure wind up this deal the same as yo'-all has wound up every other one, by bein' caught slippin' an ace from the bottom of the deck, when yo' could make yo'r fortune if yo' only had the nerve to take the long chance just oncet."



But Whisky Bill didn't mention the matter to the Tenderfoot, and neither did anybody else, and the outfit shoved on across one of those wide mesquite flats with mountains all around it; and the sun came up high; the mules were jumping into their collars; everything looked serene. Anyhow, that's the way it appeared to the Tenderfoot, who was riding alongside the lead wagon, until he noticed that Bronco Mitchell, who was the teamster, kept gazing back as if he saw something there in the mountains behind them which he didn't like.

Now, the Tenderfoot had stood a heap of rough joshing on account of the questions he had asked, and he was getting sort of sick of it; so now he said nothing at first but took a good long look at the range back there himself; and finally he noticed a thin line of smoke climbing into the sky. Then his curiosity got the best of him.

"Funny about that smoke back there," he said as carelessly as he was able.

"Hellish funny," says Bronco Mitchell, and he was so sour about it that the Tenderfoot made up his mind to keep his mouth shut for the rest of the trip. But inside of half an hour or so he got sight of another smoke-line rising from the range straight ahead of them, which was more than he could stand.

"Look here now," he says, "what does this mean, anyhow?"

Bronco Mitchell bit off a chew of tobacco and cussed out his lead mules, who were tending to their business as properly as any man could ask, and then he answers:

"I'll tell yo' what it means, jest so's to set yo'r mind at rest. This here smoke, as yo'-all has probably noticed, is coming up in puffs of white and black, which is the Apache fashion of telegraphin' to their friends. That there line back of us is telling how two wagon loads of grub is crossing this flat with three men in charge and two damn fools riding along for company. And that there line in front of us is saying:

"Thanks for the info'mation, and we'll be on the job this afternoon."

"There's probably a heap more, with mebbe an invite for the Apaches back there to come on and attend the party which them ahead of us figures on holding when they've killed off enough of us to capture the rest. But I am not way up on them things like some folks, and all I figure on

readin' from these here signs is what yo'-all might call the gen'ral drift."

THE Tenderfoot's mouth was getting sort of dry just then, but he managed to thank Bronco Mitchell for telling him, and he rode on in the dust, feeling a little sickish in the pit of his stomach and wishing he'd taken the advice which his folks had given him and stayed at home with his money. After a while One Too Many came spurring up on his pony and put a little more heart into him by lying to him about the Indians he had fought and letting on how he'd get the outfit through all right. But even One Too Many's stock of lies seemed to have sort of run short this morning, and his fat face was dripping sweat mighty free.

Early that afternoon they were traveling through the broken country which rises up to those mountains that they'd seen ahead of 'em, and Whisky Bill was in front with his wagon. He had a big raw-boned mouse-colored mule by the name of Julius Cæsar on the lead, and this animal had been stolen one time by the White Mountain Apaches. His experiences during that spell had given him a holy horror of Indians, and he could smell 'em for a long ways. The outfit was pulling along a piece of side-hill road—and just ahead of 'em a grade that dropped into a narrow draw—when Julius Cæsar began 'to have a fit of hysterics. Right away Whisky Bill pulled up, and while he was calming down the other seven mules, which had to surge around and paw the air because they saw that the nigh leader was scared, he got sight of something moving down in the draw in front of 'em. It looked as if a little patch of bear grass was stirring in the wind—only there wasn't any breeze. He didn't wait for anything more but let out a yell:

"Indians!"

Right away old Julius Cæsar dropped in his tracks as dead as the man he was named after, and the air was just buzzing with flying lead. It looked as if the whole side hill was boiling over, the smoke-puffs came so thick from behind the rocks. Whisky Bill was cutting loose the wheelers' traces; Bronco Mitchell was pouring leather into his team, bringing 'em up alongside; One Too Many Jones and the Tenderfoot were being knocked around in the middle of the mess, and by the time they'd gotten off of their ponies, the two

wagons were lined out side by side; enough bags and boxes were unloaded to make a good breastworks with the help of Julius Cæsar's corpse; and the rifles were beginning to whang away.

Now, there are two nasty parts to an Indian fight—one when the noble red man is making his first rush trying to disorganize his white brothers by a grand hullabaloo, and the other during the rest of the time when you are settled down to business and trying to save cartridges enough to hold off attacks till help comes along. Outside of that, it's all pie.

This afternoon the Apaches had been caught up a little too soon, or the first part would have been all there was to the trouble, for there were about fifty of them to the five white men. If the wagons had gone down the hill into the draw, they'd have just simply eaten up the outfit right away; but Julius Cæsar had attended to that, and as things turned out, the bulk of the ambushing party were below the proposed victims.

I said five white men. There'd been five of 'em at the start, but Bronco Mitchell's roustabout got his in the same volley that killed off Julius Cæsar, which left the two teamsters, One Too Many and the Tenderfoot to hold things down.

FOR about a quarter of an hour the grand opening kept up—Apaches slipping in and out among the rocks, dirty turbans showing where you didn't expect 'em, and bobbing out of sight again just as you were getting your sights lined; and all the time the noise of the big-bore rifles and the smell of powder-smoke, and Indians crowding in on the wagons until there didn't seem to be a living chance of holding 'em off. And then, when it looked to be worst, and the four men under the wagons were shooting away at everything that moved, as ugly as blind rattlesnakes that strike at whatever stirs within their range, the place turned still. There wasn't an Apache in sight, excepting for a few dead ones among the rocks. The Tenderfoot heard Whisky Bill telling him to draw down his sights the next time he started shooting.

"And take it slow," says the old-timer. "We aint got ca'rtridges enough for yo'-all to go blazing away at the mountain-tops. This here fracas is going to last longer than yo' think, and yo'll get yo'r belly full of shootin' before yo're done today."

As nearly as they could figure it, they'd killed six Indians, which was doing pretty well; and that made things come easier for the next hour or so, because the Apache always was a rank quitter the minute he had an idea his skin was in danger—a sure-thing man when it came to fighting, willing to wait a week if he had to, rather than show his head where a bullet was liable to happen along. When he finished the first big rush, his game was always to tease the white man into wasting cartridges by making what military people would call demonstrations, and then when dusk was coming on, he'd try another big attack. So now there'd be a spell when everything was as quiet as if there wasn't a renegade within fifty miles; then a rifle or two would crack up in the rocks, and maybe the white men would whang away for thirty seconds or so under the wagons; after which the noise would quit with only a bag once in a long time, and nothing in sight except the dead Indians sprawled among the granite boulders and the heat-waves jiggling away over the whole place as if it was the top of a stove on baking day.

Probably this fight would have gone right on according to the regular program in such cases if it hadn't been for a streak of hard luck. One of the renegades happened to draw down his sights a little finer than the others, and the bullet, instead of cutting through the wagon-cover like most of the rest, got Bronco Mitchell between the eyes.

The worst of it was that the Apaches saw Bronco Mitchell all spread out before the others could drag him back out of sight, and realizing that the odds were now fifty-to-three made them feel mighty brave all of a sudden. They came dribbling down through the rocks and the bear-grass, and all hell was loose again. The Tenderfoot was lying behind Julius Cæsar with Whisky Bill beside him and trying hard to remember the advice which the mule-skinner had given him about shooting low. Between shots he could hear the old-timer swearing in a sort of chant; but just as things were getting mighty hot, he noticed how the cursing had stopped.

The Tenderfoot didn't really do any thinking about it at the time, because he'd got a glimpse of a pot-bellied San Carlos brave, with a belt full of cartridges and a loin-cloth for clothes, who was creeping up to the crest of a little ridge about fifty yards away, and he was putting his whole



mind on getting that Apache; but afterward, when he'd had the satisfaction of doing his killing, the attack began to fall off again, and he turned to say a word to Whisky Bill. The teamster was pumping another cartridge into the chamber of his rifle, but his lower jaw was slewed away down against the stock and blood was covering his shirt front. Even the rankest tenderfoot could understand that things were looking bad right now.

It was then that One Too Many Jones jumped in and did the thing that I started to tell you fellows about. Up to this time he'd been keeping mighty quiet as far as talking was concerned, doing his share of the shooting the same as everybody else, but looking sort of squalmish, as if the smell of powder didn't agree with his stomach. When he saw the Tenderfoot tying up Whisky Bill's head in a handkerchief, making him look for all the world like an old woman with the toothache, One Too Many lay there with his eyes half shut, as if he was doing some hard thinking. All of a sudden his fat face became sort of tight, and then he spoke like a man who has studied the matter over and made up his mind.

"Boys," he says, "somebody's got to make a run for Fort Grant, and the other two can mebbe hold her down till the cavalry gets here."

WHISKY BILL made a noise as if he'd give a whole lot to talk just then, but One Too Many told him to lay still and turned to the Tenderfoot.

"My pony's over there behind them rocks," says he, "I saw him a little while back. Now, Kid, you get right out of this before them Indians is wise—crawl through the bear-grass, and when you've caught the hoss, why, crowd him down the hill and through that gulch as fast as he can make it. The road runs eight miles or so straight to the post."

"And how about you?" says Tenderfoot.

"Why, me and Whisky Bill will play this here hand out together," One Too Many answers. Which was all the talk there was about it, and the Tenderfoot started off right away on his belly in the bear-grass. The Apaches got sight of him when he was about halfway to the bronco, but the minute one of 'em showed his turban, One Too Many and Whisky Bill pumped lead so industriously that there was mighty little enthusiasm about shoot-

ing up there on the side hill until the boy was riding down the gulch. The last he heard of the two men that he'd left behind him was the crack-cracking of their rifles, and then he had the pounding of the pony's hoofs for music in his ears while he wondered if he could last to Fort Grant or if the bleeding where an Apache bullet had got him through the shoulder would lay him out before he reached the post.

THE Colonel paused to beg tobacco and papers from the Cattleman, and rolled another cigarette.

"I remember that fight now," the Judge said pensively. "I was coming down through Ash Springs way when they told me about it. And One Too Many—"

The Colonel waved his cigarette by way of silencing the interruption and resumed his tale.

IT was late in the afternoon—away along toward the beginning of the evening, in fact—when the Apaches tried another rush. They'd figured out how long it would take to go to Fort Grant and back, and they'd been creeping down an inch or so at a time, getting from cover to cover and drawing closer to the wagons, until they had reached the beginning of the open ground. And now when they knew they had to crowd matters,—provided the boy had reached the post,—they came.

One Too Many Jones and Whisky Bill understood what this meant, and they had four rifles to work between 'em without reloading. Any man can shoot at point-blank range when he's got to, and they surely had to. They realized too that they hadn't any cartridges to waste.

For a few minutes they did some pretty wicked killing, and then the Apaches broke again. But old Victorio himself was in command of the band, and he didn't like the idea of being stood off along with fifty bucks by two white men; so he pounded his bunch on the back and sent 'em down the hill once more. But this rush ended swifter than the other one, and it was getting dusk now when the renegades sneaked off to cover.

They didn't know that One Too Many Jones and Whisky Bill were pawing around in the sand trying to find a stray cartridge that some one might have dropped—and finding none. There was not a single round of ammunition left under the wagons when old Victorio, who had sneaked up

as far as he dared to, called out from behind a granite boulder in Spanish, and what he said went something like this: Because the two white men had been so brave, he'd let 'em surrender and hold 'em in safety as prisoners, so he could make a better dicker with the military when it came to getting terms to go back on the reservation. But if they did not give up, the bunch would come on again and kill 'em off.

But One Too Many, who'd managed to accumulate two bullets through the body, cursed him from behind Julius Caesar.

"Come on," he called, "and the more, the better! We're waiting for you." So naturally, the Indians drew farther off and waited for the darkness.

When the troopers got to the place about fifteen minutes later, the Apaches were making their rush, which they'd not had the nerve to try as long as there was light enough for a man to line his sights. The whole thing ended with a volley from the cavalry. While the soldiers were chasing the renegades up across the ridge, and the post surgeon was trying to patch up two holes in One Too Many's side, he managed to ask:

"How about the kid?" The surgeon told him that the Tenderfoot was going to pull through all right, and One Too Many looked over at Whisky Bill.

"A gambler's chance," he says, and closed his eyes.

THE Colonel paused again; and I, thinking this the end, commented:

"I call that pretty fine."

The others made no sound, for the narrator was smiling peculiarly. "So did I call it pretty fine," he said, "for a while. But One Too Many opened his eyes again about three days later. And inside of a month he finished up his trip with the Tenderfoot and sold those fake claims—just as he'd hoped to sell 'em when he took his gambler's chance and saved the boy's life.

"And so, I'd like to know where that fat swindler lies buried, in order that I might go to the place and build a monument on which I'd write:

*"He saved my life and taught me sense."*

"Your life!" I exclaimed.

"Mine," was his reply. "I was that Tenderfoot."

There will be another fine story by Frederick R. Bechdolt in our next issue.

## Entered in Red

THREE men sat about the table: Hallowell Grew, the district attorney; Tom Street, his chief investigator; and Bernard Mulcahy, State representative from the Shoptown district. They were discussing, with considerably more seriousness than the death of two notorious police characters seemed to warrant, the latest killings in Kerry Patch.

Mr. Mulcahy drummed four fat fingers on the mahogany surface.

"Looks to me like an' open an' shut cinch," he declared. "Dicky-bird Carter shot Barney Fife, an' Policeman Malloy shot Dicky-bird Carter. What's there in that to worry about?"

The district attorney's face reddened, and his lips compressed.

"Don't you think there's anything to worry about in the fact that Big Tom Callaghan's gang has been getting knocked off at the rate of about one a night since they framed Steve Dunham?" he demanded. "Doesn't it bother you to know that Fancy Dan Dunham has evidence locked away some place that gives him control over the publishers of the biggest newspaper in this State, and enough power to put any one of us away politically. Don't you see anything remarkable in the fact that Dunham is still at large, with Callaghan and the police and Street here all supposed to be gunning for him? Seems to me that's something to take notice of!"

"I don't believe he's in town," declared Street with a trace of peevish hostility in his tone. "Whatever Callaghan and the cops have done, I know I've tailed him since the day his brother swung. I'm tellin' you the Patch has gone cuckoo. Callaghan's mob are pullin' down their gats on their own shadows. It's a cinch somebody's goin' to get killed, and they give the credit to Dunham. I don't think



An Adventure  
of Fancy Dan,  
a Knight of  
Kerry Patch

QJ  
Robert J. Casey



he's had a thing to do with it—not a thing, I tell you."

Hallowell Grew sniffed.

"I'm telling you he's had everything to do with it," he declared. "He swore he'd get the men who framed his brother; and one by one they're dropping off. They get killed in battles with the police and fights among themselves. But who's behind it? Fancy Dan! He said he'd do the job. The job is done! That evidence might not go in a court, but it's good enough for me. Unless that man's killed or behind bars, or the hiding-place of the documents I have mentioned is discovered pretty soon, Street is going to have a successor, and you, Mr. Mulcahy, will find yourself—so far as your party organization is concerned—dead, embalmed and buried."

"He'll turn up, commented Mulcahy dubiously. "An' there's no use gettin' excited about his dope on the *Daily Telegram*. He's had all that stuff for ten years an' he hasn't ever bothered anybody with it."

"Don't forget that he can prove fraud in the *Telegram's* land title—and that land has gone up in value a hundred thousand dollars in ten years."

"Somebody'll find his safe before long," declared Mulcahy. "Either that, or he'll come out of cover long enough for Callaghan to attend to him."

"I tell you he's not in town," reiterated Street.

MEANWHILE, at the wheel of an automobile parked at the curb outside the unbeautiful red stone building, almost under the windows of the district attorney's office, as cool and unconcerned as if he did not know that at least three of the city's secret interests were seeking his life, sat Fancy Dan Dunham.

It was no spirit of bravado that had brought him into the bailiwick of his enemies. He had trailed Big Tom Callaghan, political gang leader, to the headquarters of Mulcahy, and had followed Mulcahy to the district attorney's office. Now he was resting calmly within a stone's throw of the jail where a number of official personages would willingly have placed him, awaiting developments.

Dunham felt little of the thrill that comes with known danger as he leaned over the wheel and surveyed the lawyers, judges, clerks, police, politicians, jurymen and fag ends of humanity that passed incessantly in and out of the great swinging doors to the criminal courts. He had not sprung to the undisputed leadership of a section where only the strong could survive without an inbred knowledge of psychology. The tendency of all humankind and especially police to observe the mote and overlook the beam had been proved to his satisfaction many times before now. Because they would not be expecting to see him here, even the men who knew him best would pay him scant attention. And in event of discovery—the street was open, and the powerful engine under the hood was marking time.

He realized that his affairs had come to a crisis. The thrusts of his long arm had thrown Kerry Patch into terror. The bloodshed incident to the removal of his foes had been a matter of little credit to the police, and the newspapers were in a frenzy of red-inked vituperation. And he

knew that should he be detected, he could hope for no quarter. Yet he lingered there, prompted to his waiting by the same causes that made the vigil precarious. Any moment his task of vengeance might be interrupted. He could hope to finish the work only by swift strokes, and immediately. Therefore he lazed in the cushions, to take up the trail of Mulcahy when he should reappear again.

There was an oppressive influence in the air about the smoke-stained bastille. Before Fancy Dan's eyes arose the vision of the day, one week ago, when Steve had paid the penalty for his faith in mankind—the innocent sacrifice to the law for the crime of another man. Behind those barred windows at the corner of the second floor Steve had passed, a jailer in front of him, and guards at his side, on the way to the gallows. And in the street—now drearily empty and commonplace—thongs had fought for place along the entire block before the jail, carnival throngs that laughed and joked hysterically or cursed, and battled energetically as the fickle spirit moved them. These were folks of the sort that once were accustomed to give up all work and stand all night before Newgate in old London in anticipation of the choice spectacle of a public execution. But they were typically the product of a new-world psychology in that here they could not hope for the gratification of their morbid yearnings by so much as a sight of the victim. They could feel only the thrill of proximity—and the sudden surge of an atavistic blood-lust as the crash of the falling trap echoed dully through the closed windows. They had stood from wall to wall across this narrow little street, hundreds of them, taking public enjoyment in the prospect of a man's death.

FANCY DAN shuddered and closed his eyes momentarily in an attempt to shut out the memory. He opened them to notice for the first time that a girl was standing across the street, opposite the entrance to the criminal courts building, watching him. He started, and was instantly alert. He had learned through long experience with the guerrilla warfare of the Patch, that those who interested themselves in his movements seldom wished him well. An automatic lay close at hand between his knees; he moved it so that it could be more easily reached.

Then he realized with a start that the girl was not a stranger. A large black, lace-rimmed hat shaded her face, and a neat, tailored suit of blue serge made her appear quite another person than the gray-clad, fur-muffled young woman of a previous adventure. But there was no doubting her identity. She was Helen Crandall, the girl whom Steve might have married had she not changed her mind about the engagement and eloped with an attorney of some promise.

Dunham had met her once since then—the night that the law had claimed Steve as a sacrifice. He had wondered then at her presence in the city, had suspected her of allegiance to his enemies. But at the crisis of an encounter with the police she had maintained a strict neutrality that had been puzzling him ever since.

Fancy Dan had no great liking for mysteries. In his mode of living it behooved him to catalogue exactly every person who crossed his path. There was always menace in the unknown and unexplainable, and the peril was quite apt to be double where the enigma was feminine. His eyes narrowed to slits as he scrutinized her with a glance totally devoid of appreciation of her beauty. He saw in her not the attractive woman but the possible "stool" he had believed her to be on the occasion of their first meeting. Her presence aroused him to a sense of his danger.

Inwardly raging at the thought that he must abandon his vigil and seek a safer spot at once, he very casually pushed out the clutch and slid the gear-shift out of neutral. No amount of dare-deviltry, he knew, could justify his remaining serenely over a powder-mine when the application of the torch was threatening. But even as he turned the wheels toward the center of the street preparatory to releasing the pedal that would send the power from the idling motor pulsing along the drive-shaft, he felt the urge to face the woman and determine her connections once and for all.

Then, quite unexpectedly, she solved his problem for him.

SHE smiled ingratiatingly as if aware for the first time of his identity, left the shade of a confectioner's awning to cross the sun-whitened walk, stepped daintily over the cobbled pavement to the side of the car, placed a slim hand on the door and greeted him.



"Who would ever think of finding you here?" she gurgled.

Fancy Dan felt instinctively that he was in a tight mesh. He darted a quick glance at the entrance of the court building to see what effect this pretty encounter might have upon casual onlookers. Apparently they hadn't noticed it. They passed on,—up or down the broad stairs at the entrance,—as blind as the goddess with the bandaged eyes who swung her empty scales above the door. Quick to adjust himself to any situation, he returned her salutation with a smile of recognition.

"Just happened to be down this way and stopped to wait for a lawyer friend of mine," he explained.

"Will you be here long?" she inquired, innocently enough.

"I really couldn't tell," he answered her with a perfect simulation of frankness. "You never can tell how long these petty cases take."

"I was thinking—" She paused to glance at the pilgrims of justice entering the temple—a glance that Fancy Dan followed with a thrill of foreboding despite its apparent lack of motive. "I was thinking that perhaps I could get you to drive me over town. I have an appointment that I shan't be able to keep if I have to walk to the car."

"Oh, that's simple enough," agreed Dunham, leaning over to open the door. "Get in, and we'll let the lawyer wait a while."

Still smiling, she bent forward to keep her hat from collision with the low top. The droopy brim hid her face, and Fancy Dan, usually ready for the unexpected, was startled to hear her suddenly whisper a warning:

"Drive north," she told him in a tense voice. "There's a motorcycle cop at the south corner. Somebody just looked out of the district attorney's window. He seems to know you."

Dunham, whatever he might have felt concerning the source of the information, was quick to see that he had nothing to lose by accepting it. If he had been discovered, whether because of the girl's surveillance or not, he had nothing to gain by lingering near the enemy's headquarters. He let in the clutch, and the powerful car shot away from the curb before Helen Crandall was well settled in the seat beside him.

Just before he turned the corner into the Avenue, he caught a glimpse of some one signaling from an upper window of the criminal courts building to the motorcycle policeman, and he noted with satisfaction that the cycle had stalled.

FANCY DAN said little to his companion as he maneuvered the car by streets little frequented by motorcycle policemen westward from the heart of the city and then south. Outwardly he was as calm as if he had never heard of the police or Big Tom Callaghan or Hallowell Grew. Inwardly he knew that he rode with death, and anything that he might have to say to the beautiful Helen could be postponed until the necessity for vigilance had passed.

He picked his way block by block in a zigzag course through factory districts, railroad yards and smelly slums until he came to the long, low shops that marked the boundary of Kerry Patch. He turned abruptly east, through Chinatown, where the refuse from the streets lay in unswept riffles on the sidewalks, and shreds of crimson *tong* bulletins molded on the walls, and south once more in a paved alleyway that served as Shoptown's chief memorial to a city hall chieftain who had had a friend in the concrete business. Suddenly he brought the car to a stop at a narrow door in a blank wall.

"We'll get out here a while," he told the girl in a tone that was not the less commanding because gentle. "This is a private entrance to Toroni's place—and I've found from experience that the bulls aren't likely to come here looking for me."

She acquiesced without comment, and passed into the café as he held the door open for her. They traversed a short passageway and brought up in a rear room no different in appearance from any quiet, orderly, city restaurant. Despite the time consumed in their circuitous ride, it still lacked several minutes of six o'clock, and Toroni's did not become the bacchanalian bedlam mentioned so often in reformers' reports, until after nightfall. Fancy Dan and the girl took seats at a booth table, rang for a waiter and ordered a light luncheon.

Then Dunham settled back in his chair and grinned whole-heartedly.

"Well," he observed after the white-aproned attendant had gone. "It appears that I'm in your debt again."

The girl looked at him quizzically.

"Do you know, Dan," she said, "I don't think you trust me a bit."

THE quick intuition betrayed by the reply startled Dan. He had thought his dissimulation perfect. But he did not make the error of a flat denial. He smiled and shook his head.

"You're right to a certain extent, Helen," he agreed. "I've kept myself in office as the *Simon Legree* of these parts by the simple method of not trusting anybody. But I'll tell you candidly that if I hadn't trusted you, I'd have dumped you out of the car at the first convenient spot."

She was silent for a moment but gave no further indication of suspicion.

"I was surprised to come back and find you still in Kerry Patch, Dan," she said at length. "I had believed somehow that you would grow out of your environment."

"I did," he replied, and was instantly amazed at the realization that he wished to retain her good opinion. He could not reconcile the mood with his persistent doubt of her.

"I did," he repeated. "I was out of Patch politics for years. And then they framed on Steve. I came back here to deal out justice; and to a certain extent I've been successful. I can't quit until the job is done."

She shuddered.

"But it is so unnecessary," she protested, "—and so dangerous."

He glanced at her sharply, but she did not seem to notice it.

"You could have avenged Steve by working through the city hall or the courts—you know you could; and you could have done it all without being hounded through the streets like a hunted animal."

There was a personal note in her vehemence that surprised him but he did not attempt to analyze it.

"The hunters don't seem to be having any amazing amount of success," he countered.

"No," she admitted. "But I wasn't brought up here in the Patch without knowing something about it. Once the killing starts, only God knows when it will stop. And some day, Dan, they'll get you. You can't fight them alone."

"Oh, but I can. I have been fighting them alone. I've been doing what I never could have done by pulling political wires.

I've beaten them with their own weapons and made them wish that they'd died before they ever heard of Steve Dunham."

"Poor Steve!" murmured the girl. And Fancy Dan noticed for the first time that her eyes were moist.

Dan Dunham, gunman extraordinary, just about that time came upon an astonishing revelation. He had thought that this girl, whom he had loved, with the ardor of a man who makes only one choice, before she ended his hopes by accepting his brother's ring, had meant nothing to him in the ten years that had passed since her elopement. He had shunned women in the memory of her, and had promised himself that never again would he allow his head to be turned by silly sentiment. It was with considerable misgiving that he discovered how little he had known of himself during those lonely years. Across the table was a woman he should have hated, a woman whom his trained instincts warned him to suspect—and he found himself forgetting the circumstances of their meeting in the joy of hearing her speak, in the luxury of being near her.

That this radiant creature had married another man was only a dim recollection, despite that it had influenced ten years of his life. That she might be a paid spy seemed more and more impossible as he continued to look at her while the cool, sound judgment of the old Dan Dunham struggled with the whimsical impulses of the new.

In the end the cautious habits, bred of an environment of gun-fire and sudden death, gained the mastery. He realized that the same barrier that had separated them a decade ago was as strong as it had ever been, and that the love which he had so poorly controlled must not be allowed to thwart his purpose where assassins' bullets and threats of the noose had failed.

THERE followed a silence broken only by the clinking of glassware in an adjoining booth as he surveyed her with an air of disinterested ease that masked effectually the war within. Then suddenly he spoke. His manner was that of a man who has made a decision after calm thought and is no longer concerned with consequences.

"I'd like your help once more, Helen," he said. "It really shouldn't cause you any grief, but it's very important to me."



There might be such a thing as an accident that would give Tom Callaghan a chance to knock me off, and I must have somebody I can depend on to take care of one or two affairs if that should happen."

She nodded understandingly.

"I have an office in the Packers' Building in Hall Avenue at the south end of the Stockyards—this is the key to it, Room 308." He laid a brass key on the table as he spoke. "Nobody knows that it's my office. That's my only object in having it—privacy. I keep a lot of personal papers in the safe up there. I can get to it without the risk I'd take if I went to a safety-deposit vault.

"It's hardly likely that anything will happen to me with Grew's gumshoe men, and a herd of harness bulls and Callaghan's mob doing nothing but stepping on each others' feet. But you never can tell. I might fall down the elevated steps or something.

"If that should happen, I'd like to know that the things in that safe get into proper hands.

"Would you undertake to get them and turn them over to Jimmy Murray, police reporter for the *Chronicle*, if such an accident should happen?"

He was smiling as he asked the question, and continued to smile when her ready acquiescence chilled him with new suspicions.

"I'd gladly do it, Dan," she told him with a show of emotion. "I feel that I owe that much to Steve's memory."

"It's mighty good of you," said Fancy Dan as he scribbled a few figures in a notebook. He tore out the leaf and handed it to her with the office key.

"That's the combination of the safe and the number of the room," he told her. "They really shouldn't be put on paper at any time, but I don't see any help for it."

She smiled.

"There are many ways out of that predicament," she replied, taking a hairpin from one of the lustrous coils that showed like dull gold through the lace crown of her hat. "I can make a record that no one will ever be able to find but me—and you."

She laid her flat pocketbook on the table, moistened one side slightly with water from a tumbler and scratched into the soft leather the number that Fancy Dan had written out for her.

"There," she said as she completed her

work and held it up to him for inspection. "Those numbers will stay indefinitely."

Dan Dunham nodded appreciatively.

"It appears to have been my lucky afternoon, Helen," he commented. "But if you really had an appointment in town, I caused you quite a bit of inconvenience. I can take you back right away. . . ."

A smile dimpled her cheeks.

"I said that for the benefit of a plain clothes man who was standing at the curb," she told him. "And I don't think it would be good policy for us to be seen together any more today. If I am to help you, I can do it best if I am not suspected." She extracted a card from her pocketbook and passed it to him. "A call to that number will reach me. And Dan—please don't go on with it. Quit while you're alive—for my sake."

When Fancy Dan answered her, it seemed to him that his voice was coming from a great distance—an echo detached from him. Never in all his active career had he been so beset by indecision. But he took her hand in farewell without show of emotion.

"I have to go on," he said. "I have no choice. But if I live through it, I sha'n't forget that you were interested." He wondered as he spoke if he really meant it.

Then they parted. The girl passed out through the front of the café. Dan Dunham left a bill with his check on the table and stepped quickly through the rear corridor to the alley entrance where he had left his car.

He did not see a man emerge from an adjoining booth and follow after Helen Crandall—which was just as well for his peace of mind. Fancy Dan Dunham had just passed a very trying hour.

THE garage where Dunham had so far kept his car concealed from the watchful eyes of the police and the brothers of the gun was at the north end of the Patch, a long, low warehouse shed to which four seldom frequented alleys gave ingress. But Dan did not turn north as he left Toroni's. Instead he sped southward through the center of the bad-lands, keenly alert in the realization that a pistol-shot might greet him from the ambush of almost any doorway.

There was an early dusk enfolding Kerry Patch—a murk bred of soft-coal smoke contributed by a dozen factories, a wide

stretch of railroad sidings and the stockyards. But it was small protection against the keen eyes of men who had known him, hated him and rebelled at his unavoidable mastery during the long years of his leadership. Where possible he sped through alleys and over streets where he knew there were the fewest saloons. He had no desire to come to close contact with his foes again until the night's work was finished.

THERE was nothing alarming in the appearance of the street as Helen Crandall stepped out of Toroni's café. Only an automobile at the curb—a black sedan—probably stolen, she thought. The driver probably was inside taking on a personal cargo of alcohol that would give the car a prominent place in the newspaper reports of accident and crime the next morning.

She turned south toward the Thirty-fifth Street cross-town car-line, paying no attention to a hurried footstep behind her. Then suddenly came a rush. Strong hands seized her. A pair of strong arms lifted her from her feet. Before her shocked nerves recovered sufficiently to prompt a scream for help that calm judgment would have shown her to be useless under the circumstances, she was thrust through the door of the sedan car and forced into a seat. A burly figure entered after her, slamming the door.

"Sit still," he warned her. "Make a move or open your trap, an' I'll sap you."

Still retaining his grip on her arm he dropped into the driver's seat beside her. For the first time she caught a glimpse of his face, and she recognized him.

He was Big Tom Callaghan.

"Take your hands off me," she advised calmly, "and tell me what all this is about."

"It means you got yourself a bid to the wrong party, kid," said Callaghan. "We knew Dan Dunham had a scatter some place that nobody was wise to. And now we find out where it is. You're goin' with me, an' we're goin' to open this cradle an' find out what's in it."

"I don't understand you."

"Oh, yes, you do. You're hep to everything that's been pulled in Kerry Patch in the past twenty years. Why, I can remember myself when you was a freckle-faced kid down near Hogan's alley. Don't pull none of this Gold Coast stuff on me."

CALLAGHAN was in a boisterously jovial mood. His assurance that he had taken an important trick in the game with Fancy Dan Dunham was only too obvious.

"I'm not trying to deny that I belong in these parts," she told him calmly enough. "But I think I ought to be informed why I am supposed to be able to do all this."

"Lay off the rozberry, lady," he advised her. "I saw Dan's car pull up in the alley, an' I was in the next booth listenin' when he told you about this joint, see."

Helen Crandall tossed her head.

"You're wasting your time if you expect to get any dope from me," she declared, lapsing easily into the vernacular that Big Tom could best be expected to understand. "I'm not going to squawk for you or anybody else. I haven't forgotten the days in Hogan's alley, and I'm no stool."

Big Tom glanced at her appreciatively.

"We'll see about that, kid," he countered with a leer. "Squawk or croak—it's all one to me, an' that's just about how much say-so you're goin' to have. I aint handin' a thing to Dan Dunham—the dirty rat! I'm goin' to grab off the stuff that's in his keester any way I c'n get it—see!"

Helen saw. She was quite well aware that Callaghan would have no scruples in dealing with man or woman who came between him and his revenge upon Fancy Dan.

They sped southward through the darkening streets for several moments in silence. The battlefield taint of the stockyards air closed down upon them, and the crumbling tenements gave way to groups of dirty little factories. Helen realized the folly of attempting to escape under such conditions. She relaxed among the cushions and attempted to mobilize her last reserves of control and cunning.

They stopped presently before an office-building—the Packers' Block, a chiseled arch above the entrance proclaimed it—in Hall avenue at the south end of the stockyards.

"Get out," ordered Callaghan.

The girl complied, arising lazily. Without a single warning movement she leaped for the door with a suddenness that would have upset the guard of a less wily campaigner than Big Tom. But the ruse failed. His great hand tightened about



her arm with a jerk that lifted her from her feet.

"No, you don't, kid," he advised. "Another move like that, an' I'll hand you one you'll remember." He was at her side on the pavement almost instantly, displaying an agility uncanny in a man of his ponderous proportions. And the girl realized with a smothering fear that her chance to get away had vanished. The district was deserted save for a few yards-workers far down the street. A scream would have brought quick and decisive action from her captor without any advantage to herself. But the sudden reflex of despair seized upon her even as she recognized the helplessness of her situation. She turned upon Callaghan like an enraged tiger-cat, clawing and biting with the primitive savagery that knows no sex. Callaghan gave ground momentarily. Four red marks across his hard face marked the passing of the girl's hand.

And then, with brutal thoroughness, he kept his promise. He cursed her with picturesque epithet that made her ears tingle. He loosened his clasp upon her arm to draw her into a gorilla-like embrace, and caught her white throat in a paralyzing grip. She was limp and only semi-conscious as he dragged her up the stairs to the deserted third floor.

Callaghan dropped her at the threshold of Room 308 as he rummaged her pocket-book for the key. He opened the door, dragged her inside and closed it again.

**I**T was a small office—a tiny reception parlor and a larger chamber beyond. In the private office were a desk, two chairs, a small table and the safe. A few lithographs framed on the walls gave verisimilitude to the name on the door: "North American Glycerine Company." The reflection of an arc illumined the inner room through a half-open window.

Callaghan looked about approvingly. It was no discredit to his organization that his men had failed to find this place. Had the key he had taken from the girl's purse not fitted the door, he would have doubted that he had come to the right office.

He turned his attention to the handbag again and searched it diligently for a memorandum of the combination. When he found no such information, he set about reviving the prostrate Helen. He lifted her into a chair and helped her to lean limply against the desk. Then he went

back to the reception-room to get her a glass of water at the cooler.

As soon as his broad back had been turned, the wilted figure flashed back to life. Swift as a ribbon of light, a hand had passed to the disheveled bronze hair and across the corner of the desk to the telephone. When Big Tom returned with the water, the girl's position had not changed a particle. But under the receiver hook of the telephone was a hairpin, and connection with the operator at Central had been established.

Callaghan clumsily sprinkled the water in her face, and she made a show of slow revival.

"Sorry I had to be rough," he said as she opened her eyes. "But I can't take chances. If you'll sit quiet an' keep your yapper shut, we wont have no trouble."

"All right," she acquiesced weakly. "You've got me. Now what are you going to do?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Moll," he stated with a sudden display of enthusiasm. "I'll give you a share in ten grand of grift, if you'll tip me off on how to get into this box."

"Will you let me go if I tell?" she inquired tremulously.

He read surrender in her obvious helplessness. "Yes," he promised. "I'll turn you loose an' get you in right with certain guns that'll push a pile o' change your way."

The promise was somewhat indefinite, but Helen Crandall seemed to accept it at face value. "All right," she agreed. "You're on."

"Where's the combination?"

"In my head. Think I'm fool enough to carry it around on a signboard. You work the knob, and I'll tell it to you. You start right two turns—"

**H**E looked at her, grunted and went to the safe. The arc-light outside the window gave him plenty of illumination, but cast a shadow in the corner of the room where Helen Crandall sat dejectedly in her chair. He could not see her hand as she slipped a telephone directory and a handkerchief under the receiver to muffle clicks and noises should the operator's attention become aroused.

"Yeh," called Big Tom, "two turns right—what then?"

"Left to sixty," directed the girl.

Then her heart surged exultantly. Her

quicken senses caught a faint sound filtering through the handkerchief under the receiver: "Number, please."

She leaned forward so that her head was close to the mouthpiece and gave Callaghan his next directions:

"Center to thirteen."

"Central thirteen," she heard the operator repeat, and could hardly suppress a cry of triumph. "Central Thirteen" was police headquarters.

Callaghan suddenly straightened.

"What are you talkin' about?" he demanded. "That's no combination."

"It's what he told me," she repeated languidly. "You bring it back to center, and then keep going to thirteen."

Some vague association of ideas in connection with the numbers seemed to have aroused the big boss' suspicions.

"If you're bullin' me, Moll, I'll break your face," he promised her. But he bent once more to carry out her instructions.

"Right three times to twenty-five and open," she called.

She was prepared for his howl of rage when he had completed the operation and tugged without effect upon the nickle-plated handle. But she was not prepared for his sudden display of venom.

He turned from the safe, pulled down the window shade, crossed the room in four quick steps and switched on the light.

Helen, still crouched in the chair, gazed at him blankly.

"What's the matter?" she inquired.

"You double-crossed me," he snarled with a curse. "I'm goin' to get the straight dope on this cradle if I have tuh croak you to do it. Get me."

"You made a mistake some place," she replied indifferently.

"Nope, it's your bull. You picked the wrong bird for a cuckoo. When I get through with you this time, you'll be glad to come across."

**S**HE was too weak to resist as he forced her down into the chair and twined his fingers about her throat again. But she screamed once, confident as consciousness dimmed, that her voice had carried to "Central Thirteen."

A wild rage had seized upon the gangster. He forgot the cause of his attack in a growing passion for revenge. Her lips were purpling when his eye was suddenly arrested by her pocketbook, which lay on the small table almost directly be-

neath the electric light, where he had thrown it when the search for the combination proved fruitless. Under the light tiny abrasions in the leather were visible—marks that he gradually recognized as figures. With a triumphant oath he released his grip on the girl's throat and allowed her to slip unheeded to the floor.

In a moment he was at the safe again, feverishly twirling the knob. In less than a minute he heard the last tumbler click into place. He turned the handle. The heavy door swung open.

The safe was empty save for a japanned document-box—but he had expected to find nothing else. He put it under his arm and started for the door. Then he noticed the girl again. She was just stirring to consciousness.

A primitive animal was Big Tom—a starving wolf with the dogs at his heels, and in common with his kind, a dispassionate killer. He knelt beside the huddled form prepared to sink his talons once more in her bruised throat. But a second later he was on his feet, his pistol drawn and shooting.

**F**ANCY DAN DUNHAM had come into the room via the window. His first shot seared Big Tom's shoulder. His second was sent into the ceiling as Callaghan's bullet struck his hand. But there the encounter ended. Big Tom seized the document case and fled.

Dunham followed him as far as the head of the stairs, then dashed back to the office, closed the door and switched off the light. He had caught the flash of a blue uniform across the street under an arc-lamp. He had heard the sudden snapping of pistols and had guessed that the fight had passed out of his hands.

He carried the semi-conscious girl to the window-sill and thence forced her to crawl along a terra cotta ledge to a near-by fire-escape landing. He carried her up the iron stairs to the roof, across it and over the top of an adjoining building and down a second fire-escape on the opposite side. The balanced steps of the last fire-escape swung down like a drawbridge into an areaway a few feet from Dunham's car. He helped her to a seat and leaped in beside her.

They were out in a street parallel to Hall Avenue and well on their way to the office of a physician who Fancy Dan knew would prove discreet—while echoing shots



still proclaimed the presence of the police at the entrance of the Packers' Building. Fancy Dan had ceased to worry about the outcome of the battle. Helen Crandall had passed through the test of fire and had proved herself, and he had lost the burden of a great doubt. He felt an unexplainable elation as he felt her trembling touch upon his arm. True, she was another man's wife—as far from him now as she had ever been. But suspicion and indecision had left him—and the sense of his loss was no greater now than it had been for a decade.

**P**OLICEMAN HOOLIN of the Stockyards Station did not recognize Big Tom Callaghan as he plunged down the stairs with a tin box under his arm and a fuming pistol in his right hand. He saw only the safe-robber mentioned some three minutes previously in an emergency call from headquarters as he pulled his box. He flattened himself behind a pillar and opened fire.

Callaghan fought back. He edged his way along the front of the building until he came opposite his waiting automobile. Then, shooting as he ran, he made a dash for the curb. A bullet bit into his side. He stopped only long enough to turn about for a quick but careful aim. Policeman Hoolin collapsed on the sidewalk.

Other bluecoats joined the fray, and the firing had become a fusillade as the boss threw his gears into mesh and let in his clutch. The glass doors of his sedan crashed about his ears, but the car shot into the center of the street and out of range. Only a red spot at the curb left evidence that the marksmanship of the police had been effective.

Far out on the North Side, Callaghan let himself into the office of Hallowell Grew and staggered to the table at which the district attorney sat waiting.

"You're late," was the official's greeting.

Callaghan's pale face flushed momentarily with triumph.

"I found Dunham's scatter," he announced as he shoved the black box across

the table. "I opened his cradle an' got this. It's the stuff—see? We got this rat where we want him now. I probably croaked a harness bull an' got burnt myself haulin' this stuff away. But I'd copped a whole mob o' bulls to be rid o' Dunham." He coughed violently.

Grew did not notice. He had begun to work excitedly upon the lock of the tin case with a heavy paper knife.

"Hurry," whispered Big Tom. "I want a lamp the stuff before I go down to the old doc an' get patched up."

The black lid flew open with a snap.

The district attorney's face went gray.

One by one he took from the box seven white slips, each inscribed with a name. Four of them were marked with red crosses. Big Tom stared with glazing eyes.

One by one he read aloud in a quivering voice the names before the red marks:

"Dicky-bird Carter, Barney Fife, Rummy Walker, Sparrow Higgins, Red Hartley—" All were members of Callaghan's mob, and all victims of sudden death within the week, except Hartley who was awaiting trial on a murder charge. His vision was failing as he deciphered the two remaining slips:

"Dutch Albert Shilk—and—Big—Tom Callaghan!"

"Looks like a joke," observed the district attorney, who did not see the crimson blot widening on his visitor's white shirt-front.

"It is," agreed Callaghan with a horrible leer. "It is—another of Dan Dunham's jokes." He began a terrible laugh that was choked off in a fit of coughing. "Next time the joke's goin' to be on somebody else."

He pitched forward across the table, and for the first time Hallowell Grew noticed the seriousness of his injury.

Big Tom Callaghan's dying fingers were clutched about the empty box for which he had paid with his life, and a red stain, spreading over the polished mahogany and the seven white slips, was blotting out the record of his debt on Dan Dunham's grim ledger.

**T**HERE will be another of Captain Casey's engrossing stories of Fancy Dan in our next issue. And there will be many other delightful stories to keep it company; the March Blue Book will be the best ever.

# A Lesson in Salesmanship



The wily crew of the *Jane Gladys* attend strictly to business—of a not wholly nautical sort.

By F. Morton Howard

**G**AUNT and forlorn lay the *Jane Gladys* at her berth in Shoreham Harbor, with all her sinister prestige as a hotbed of petty knavery fast fading from her, so that her presence no longer moved the townspeople to any quicker emotion than cold contempt. For soon the *Jane Gladys* was to be put up for sale by auction, which is tantamount to saying that she was no longer a seagoing vessel, but merely an amalgamation of old timber and rusting iron awaiting disintegration at the hands of the ship-breaker.

Already her cook, Mr. Horace Dobb, had exchanged residence in her galley for a life ashore, where he had found himself a profitable billet as husband to a lady who owned a snug secondhand-dealer's business in Esre Street. Already that plump veteran, Mr. Samuel Clark, aided thereto by Mr. Dobb, had ceased to be a unit in a crew, and was now an entire crew in himself, manning the ferryboat which plied across the harbor at its mouth.

And Captain Dutt, the skipper of the *Jane Gladys*, had retired on a pension to cultivate vegetables in the garden and patience in the house so straitly controlled by his wife. And Mr. George Martin, lately the mate, when last heard of, was boasting the *Roving Lad* to be the finest barque that ever sailed the nearer seas.

Indeed of all the familiar spirits of the

*Jane Gladys*, only Mr. Peter Lock and Mr. Joseph Tridge still lingered, and they, for the present, were acting as caretakers to the doomed vessel. In this capacity, each exhibited a flattering confidence in the vigilance of the other, and therefore both were fast asleep in their bunks when, one mid-morning, Mr. Clark snatched a few minutes from his duties to visit them.

Clearly it was on business of some import that Mr. Clark came to see them, for he had plied his oars up the river in so unsparingly a style that aged amphibians, meditating on the quay, blinked amazedly at his passing, and made querulous comments implying that the spectacle of a hurrying ferryman had added an eighth wonder to the world.

Mr. Clark, arriving at his destination, fastened his boat to the steps and hastened, disheveled and exhausted, down to the fo'c's'le of the *Jane Gladys*.

"Hi!" he shouted. "Doings!"

His words rang flatly, as an anticlimax, through the fo'c's'le, for neither Mr. Tridge nor Mr. Lock stirred beneath their blankets, and Mr. Clark had expended the last breath of his stock of energy in making the announcement.

There was therefore a little wait, while Mr. Clark sat on a sea chest, mopping at his forehead with a scarlet cotton handkerchief which seemed positively anæmic in



hue when thus brought into juxtaposition with Mr. Clark's heightened complexion. For some while, the stout mariner's very existence seemed to dangle insecurely from a chain of pantings and wheezings, and he could do no more than regard his slumbering friends out of eyes that rolled in helpless urgency. But at last he recovered sufficiently to rise to his feet and totter forward to shake the unconscious Mr. Tridge by the shoulder.

"No, not me!" murmured the sleeping Mr. Tridge. "I paid for the *last* round."

"Hi, wake up! Wake up, Joe!" requested Mr. Clark impatiently. "There aint a moment to spare!"

AT these momentous words, some working of Mr. Tridge's conscience impelled him to fling off his bedclothes in alarm and emerge acrobatically from his bunk, and he had already pulled on his boots before he was quite aware that Mr. Clark was present.

"'U-ll-o?" he said uncertainly. "I thought—" His gaze apprehended the traces of exertion still visible on Mr. Clark's visage. "What's come out?" he asked.

"Tell you in a minute," promised Mr. Clark, and transferred his attention to bringing Mr. Lock into wakefulness.

Mr. Lock opening his innocent blue eyes, yawned in a refined manner and then smiled prettily on Mr. Clark.

"Quite like old times to see you aboard, Sam," he observed. "Got a bob to lend us?"

"You wake up properly!" recommended Mr. Clark. "I got some news. You wake up and listen!"

"If it's good news, I will wake up and listen," returned Mr. Lock. "If it's bad news, I'd rather go on sleeping a bit longer, if you don't mind."

"The *Raven*!" tersely proclaimed Mr. Clark.

Mr. Lock sat up keenly, Mr. Tridge, crying aloud that he was blown, betrayed a close, but rather perturbed, interest in Mr. Clark's tidings.

"She'll be in in about a hour's time," supplemented Mr. Clark. "I 'eard the 'arbor master say so hisself. And she's going to be berthed 'ere, alongside of you!"

"We ought to be good company for each other," said Mr. Tridge grimly.

"Yes, they'll want to get even with us for one or two things," agreed Mr. Lock.

"One or two?" demurred Mr. Tridge scornfully. "Ten or a dozen, more likely. There's scarcely been a single time when the *Jane Gladys* and the *Raven* 'ave found themselves in the same port that we haven't scored off them. Always tried to get the better of us in some nasty, sneakish, thieving way, they 'ave, and always they've found that two can play at that game."

"Time after time 'ave we beat the *Raven*!" vaunted Mr. Clark. "Time after time 'ave we diddled 'em!"

"Ammitoors!" summed up Mr. Tridge, loftily. "That's what they are—ammitoors!"

"And when they've set about catching us," boasted Mr. Clark gleefully, "we've caught them instead!"

"But then," remarked Mr. Tridge, "we always 'ad 'Orace to 'elp us, don't forget."

"Just what I was thinking," replied Mr. Clark. "And that's why I 'urried 'ere as fast as I could! Soon as ever I 'eard the *Raven* was due, I sez to myself that they'd be aching to 'ave another cut at us. Remember that smuggled 'baccy we sold to the chandler to see to them, Joe?" he asked parenthetically.

"I do," affirmed Mr. Tridge with relish. "And I bet they do, too!"

"Well," continued Mr. Clark, "don't forget they've been laid up for repairs in Yarmouth for weeks—" his voice split in soaring excitement—"and they don't know what's happening to the old *Jane Gladys*! They don't know she's to be sold, they don't know there's only you two left, they don't know 'Orace 'as got a shop ashore of 'is very own! Surely, surely there must be *something* for us in all that?"

"They certainly deserve a lesson," said Mr. Lock, not quite justifiably. "For coming alongside us so bold-faced and trying to biddle us."

"'Orace must know of this at once," decreed Mr. Tridge, with touching faith in the prowess of his old shipmate. "'E'll attend to them all right!"

"Well, I must get back to my job," said Mr. Clark. "I left a old gal with four parcels, a dog and a baby, waiting for me on the slip-way, as it is. But one of you must go straight down at once and see 'Orace. If anything's got to be done, it's got to be done quick, before them tricky, suspicious chaps on the *Raven* begins to find out things. And when she's in, I'll be 'aving colic in the Flag and Pennant, and get someone to take over my job tem-

porary on the ferry, so you must send and let me know what's doing."

Arrived at this understanding, Mr. Clark returned to his boat and made his way back to his neglected duty, while Mr. Tridge set forth, hot-foot, for the abode of Mr. Horace Dobb.

He found the ex-cook busily occupied in a corner of his little shop, doing mysterious, professional things with a pot of glue and a can of varnish. To Mr. Dobb did Mr. Tridge straightway state the import of his errand, and Mr. Dobb at once sat down on his counter and went into a sort of trance.

FULL three minutes elapsed ere satisfaction smoothed out the last of the wrinkles that corrugated his brow. Then, with a sapient nod of encouragement to Mr. Tridge, he passed into the little parlor at the back of his shop, and his voice was heard furnishing earnest information to his wife. Reappearing again to Mr. Tridge, Mr. Dobb opened a cupboard and selected therefrom two large blue plates of the sort that might, by heedless euphemism, be called ornamental.

So far as the patterns around their rims were concerned, the plates were identical, but the center of one was adorned by what purported to be the profile of a boy, while the other was presumably a singularly unlovely representation of a girl's face.

Mr. Dobb, gazing lovingly on these two abortions of ceramic art, informed Mr. Tridge that they had been acquired for the sum of eight pence, a statement which moved Mr. Tridge to reply that he, personally, would not care to give tuppence for a dozen of them, though he admitted that it seemed to him that the great truth underlying such things was that the uglier they looked, the more valuable they were.

"Bless you, these aint vallyable," said Mr. Dobb. "They aint worth anything at all, really. I only bought 'em at such a high price to put the chap what sold 'em in a good humor, so as I could beat 'im down easier on some other things 'e'd got to sell, what I really wanted. That is to say," he amended, "they aint vallyable in themselves, but I'm going to sell 'em for two pun ten the pair, and us four will divide a quid of that between us."

"And the rest?" asked Mr. Tridge.

Mr. Dobb lightly tapped himself on the chest and then nodded towards a notice he

had affixed to the wall. "Strictly Business," stated that notice, expressing thus the paramount policy which guided Mr. Horace Dobb in his commercial career.

"That's my motter," he said. "I'm providing the stock, and the idea, and the extras, so the rest is my fair profit."

"But 'oo are you going to—?"

"'Oo am I going to sell these two 'and-some and artistic works of real art to?" interrupted Mr. Dobb. "Why, to them well-known connoshers of such things, the crew of the *Raven*!"

Mr. Tridge, despite his belief in the ingenuity of his old shipmate, shook his head dubiously at such vaulting ambition.

"Very well, you'll see," promised Mr. Dobb confidently. "The *Raven* may come 'ere and think that they're going to sell us a pup, but if there's any selling to be done, I'll give 'em a lesson in salesmanship!"

Summoning his spouse, he handed her the plate decorated with the boy's head, firing a brisk series of reminders at her while he did so. Mr. Dobb then swathed the companion plate in a newspaper and tucked it beneath his arm. Finally, his spouse brought to him a small paper bag which included an aroma among its contents. Followed by Mr. Tridge, Mr. Dobb now left his establishment.

"See that?" he asked, halting outside to point up at the fascia over the shop. "It's still in my missis' name of 'Goffley,' I'm glad I never 'ad it altered to 'Dobb,' but then I always 'ad a idea it 'ud be just as well for me not to hadvertise myself too much."

It was about an hour later that the crew of the *Raven*, having concluded her berthing, found leisure to turn their attention to the neighboring *Jane Gladys*.

ON the deck of that vessel, four individuals had drawn together to watch the labors of the *Raven's* crew. There was Mr. Dobb, who, by removing his coat and hat and utilizing a little soot from the galley chimney had resumed the appearance habitual to him before minor commerce ashore had adopted him. There was Mr. Clark, whom a message to the Flag and Pennant had miraculously cured of colic and who now, clad again in a jersey he had disdainfully discarded on quitting the service of the *Jane Gladys*, fitted neatly into his place in the rally of old confederates. And there were Messrs. Tridge and



Lock, indolent and supercilious as ever, discussing the personnel of the *Raven* with a candor audible to all concerned in their remarks.

Towards this grouping did the mariners of the adjoining vessel drift along their own deck, and Mr. Alfred Porlock, appointing himself their spokesman, opened the counter attack rather crudely by asking Mr. Clark when he intended to die, adding that such a proceeding would be a mercy to himself and a relief to the rest of the seafaring world.

"'E aint going to die just yet, are you, Sam, old man?" returned Mr. Tridge gently. "If 'e can look on Alf Porlock without fainting, as 'e is doing, that's proof that there's a tremendous lot of life and strength left in 'im yet."

Mr. Porlock, brushing aside this theory, made a scathing, if vague, statement to the effect that he, at any rate, had never stolen a watch-dog; and this impelled Mr. Lock to point out that a feat of that sort needed both pluck and intelligence, and left the inference to be drawn. Mention of pluck stung Mr. Porlock to a ferocious turning-up of jersey sleeves, to which Mr. Tridge gladsomely responded with a similar demonstration, thus leading Mr. Porlock to explain that he had been speaking to Mr. Lock and had not contemplated the interference of bullies twice his own size.

Mr. Porlock then sulkily turned down his sleeves again, and there ensued a little period of rankling indecision, into which Mr. Horace Dobb's voice struck in accents unexpectedly mild.

"What's the good of all this 'ere snickering and snarling, boys?" he demanded, appealing impartially to both sides. "Why can't we all shake 'ands and settle down together friendly for once?"

"'Ere ~~it~~ comes!" warned Mr. Henry Whitten cryptically.

"That's right," agreed Mr. Porlock, with a sneer. "The friendlier 'Orace is prepared to be, the less I trusts 'im. When 'e speaks so buttery, you can be sure 'e's got something artful at the back of his mind."

"Some folks is born uncharitable," patiently enunciated Mr. Dobb, "same as others—" he added, nodding at Mr. Whitten; "same as others is born with a squint."

"If I was you, cookie," said Mr. Tridge with hauteur, "I wouldn't demean myself by being polite to 'em."

"Well, I've 'ad enough of all this scrap-

ping and rowing and argifyng," replied Horace. "I've come to see the silliness of it, and I'm all for a quiet life now."

"I dare say you are," retorted Mr. Whitten. "So's a dog when they catches 'im after 'e's stolen the Sunday joint."

"If—I says *if*—you've got a grudge against me, I'm sorry," was Mr. Dobb's dignified rejoinder. "I apologize. 'I can't say fairer than that, can I?"

Mr. Whitten was about to contest this statement very fully when Mr. Porlock, drawing him aside, whispered hotly in his ear. For a time Mr. Whitten appeared to be refusing to listen to reason, but presently he nodded his head as if at last true comprehension had come to him.

"Right you are, 'Orace!" called Mr. Porlock aloud. "I've talked George over into seeing sense. 'E says 'ow much more comfortable it'll be for us all to be friendly and matey together while we're 'ere, instead of scrapping and yapping all over the place at each other."

As token of this new amiability, the crews of the *Raven* and the *Jane Gladys* now came to an interplay of the most genteel of converse. It was, indeed, with every semblance of reluctance that the men of the former vessel at length tore themselves away from such congenial company to partake of dinner, though it was noticeable that they murmured much and rapidly to each other as they went.

"So far, so good," said Horace with a sigh of relief.

"Do you really thinks they mean to be friendly?" dubiously asked Mr. Clark.

"Not them! It's all part of the game, same as I reckoned on," replied Mr. Dobb. "They're only pretending to be friendly with us so as to make us think they aint watching out for what we'll be up to next," he explained, out of the depths of his knowledge of artifice. "They reckon we've got some plan, of course, and they're just letting on they aint suspicious. Besides, seeming friendly with us gives them a better chance to get on with any idea they might 'ave to catch us with."

MR. DOBB, having delivered this exposition, turned away and entered the galley. There he picked up a pictorially pretentious plate and shook out on it the contents of a small paper bag. A cascade of pink shrimps descended on to the plate, and these Horace arranged into a pile with a neatness which was surprising in view of

the extent to which he kept his features averted from his task.

"I've brought you a peace offering," he announced simply, descending a little later into the *Raven's* fo'c's'le, and he deposited the plate of shrimps upon the table.

"Ho, indeed?" remarked Mr. Porlock, in a toneless voice, as one reserving judgment, and Mr. Whitten, after critically sniffing the atmosphere, sat back churlishly.

"Well, I can't stop," said Horace. "Let's 'ave the plate back when you've done with it."

He nodded adieus around him with the complacent smile of a benefactor, and returned to his companions. And some twenty minutes passed before the crew of the *Raven* came again on deck and strolled along the quay to challenge the mariners of the *Jane Gladys* to resume conversation.

Gone was all the amiability which so recently had marked the demeanor of the men of the *Raven*. They stood in a row on the quay opposite to the *Jane Gladys* and bawled aloud the most iniquitous, even though truthful, things concerning that reprobate vessel.

In a compact little knot, the four companions of the *Jane Gladys* wandered to her side and gazed with deeply grieved countenances upon their turbulent aggressors.

"A nice return for my kindness!" bleated Horace pathetically. "There's gratitood for a pint and a 'alf of beautiful fresh shrimps!"

"Fresh?" passionately roared Mr. Whitten. "*Fresh?* Why, I tasted one!"

"If they wasn't fresh, I've been cheated, that's all I can say," declared Horace. "I bought 'em as fresh, any 'ow."

"When?" demanded Mr. Porlock.

"Oh, well," replied Horace evasively.

"A fortnight old, if they was a day!" asserted Mr. Whitten.

"George, I am surprised at you!" reproved Mr. Dobb, with dignity. "Where's your manners? Aint you ever 'eard that old saying about gift-'orses? Besides, I can't 'elp it if they was quite forgot about for a few 'days after they was bought, can I?"

"Don't argue with 'im, George," advised Mr. Porlock. "I'm going to talk to a policeman about it. I shouldn't be surprised if 'e couldn't make up a case of attempted manslaughter out of it."

"But I give 'em to you without prejudice," Horace observed, and because he

was understood to possess a peculiar and intimate knowledge of the ramifications of the law, Mr. Porlock refrained from exploring this issue farther.

"All the same, 'Orace," scoffed Mr. Whitten, "you aint the man you was. Your brain is losing its dash, 'Orace. Fancy taking all that trouble to get friendly with us, just to try to palm off a plate of bad shrimps on us! Fancy you thinking we'd be so green as to fall into a simple trap like that, and go and 'alf-poison ourselves, without ever suspecting your hintentions!"

"A present of a plateful of bad shrimps, 'Orace!" chimed in Mr. Porlock. "Helementary, 'Orace! Oh, very helementary!"

"I never meant you no 'arm," protested Mr. Dobb. "I simply meant it to be a friendly little present. And to prove I wasn't wishful to 'arm you, I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll take you along to the Royal George at this minute and stand you just one round."

The crew of the *Raven*, dissembling their opinion that this hospitality was merely a cloak to cover the complete failure of Mr. Dobb's dastardly attempt to wreak havoc among their digestions, accepted this offer with ostensible signs of gratitude. The two groups, then fusing into one, set forth for the hostelry named by Mr. Dobb.

It was when they were passing along Fore Street that Mr. Lock suddenly paused before the window of a small shop.

"Half a mo'!" he requested. "Here's a secondhand dealer's place, and I'm looking out for a present to send my aunt for her birthday."

He began to stare with tentative interest at a lithograph of the discovery of the infant Moses in the bullrushes, and next he called Mr. Dobb's attention to it, and also invited both Mr. Tridge and Mr. Clark to offer their expert opinions on this work of art. The men of the *Raven*, drawn up at the farther side of the window, waited dispassionately, their idle gaze ranging among the heterogeneous stock exposed for sale.

**S**UDDENLY one of these mariners stiffened and nudged Mr. Porlock and privately drew his attention to something half hidden in the corner at their side of the window. And Mr. Porlock looked at it, and made a surprised little movement, and then nudged Mr. Whitten and furtively directed that gentleman's regard to the obscurity of the corner.



For there, boldly ticketed "7/6" was a blue and white platter, identical in all respects with that which had borne Mr. Dobb's discredited gift, save in one prominent detail.

Feigning a polite boredom, Mr. Whitten and Mr. Porlock sauntered on a few paces and then began to converse in a tense and concentrated manner. At last, nodding slyly at each other, they besought the rest of the party to resume the march, urging that they were thirsty and that Mr. Lock could think of his aunt again at some more convenient time.

"Come to think of it, 'Orace," observed Mr. Lock, "it would not quite suit. There's a chap named Moses Something lives in the same street, and it might be embarrassing if ever he came to tea with my aunt and saw that picture on the wall."

He turned away from the window, and they all forthwith continued towards the Royal George. Before fifty more yards had been covered, however, Mr. Porlock stopped abruptly and applied a derogatory epithet to himself with impatient vehemence. He had, he explained, forgotten something most important, and must therefore return at once to the *Raven* to repair this neglect. As a personal favor, he begged the others not to trouble about him but to proceed to their objective, promising that he would follow as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobb's gaze wandered towards Mr. Lock, and for the smallest conceivable fraction of a second Mr. Dobb's eyelid quivered. Mr. Clark, ever naïve in the matter of his emotions, smiled outright, though, before he did so, he took the precaution of kneeling down to fiddle with a bootlace.

"I 'ope to goodness I catch the post, that's all!" said Mr. Porlock artfully, and with that he separated himself from the party and set off back to the quay. The remainder pressed on and reached the Royal George without further delay.

Mr. Porlock, arriving at the *Raven*, dashed to the fo'c's'le. Returning almost immediately to the deck, he now bore with him Mr. Dobb's crustacean offering. Dropping the shrimps overboard, he hurried back to Fore Street with the empty plate concealed beneath his coat.

An elderly lady emerged from the back-parlor when Mr. Porlock breathlessly entered the little secondhand shop. At first she seemed to be a most agreeable person

with whom to do business. On production of the blue and white plate by Mr. Porlock, she at once professed a willingness to negotiate its purchase, and, indeed, rather startled Mr. Porlock by the swiftness with which she closed with his offer to sell it for six shillings.

"'Ere's the money, and thank you!" she said astonishingly, grasping the plate and handing the money to Mr. Porlock.

HE watched her with some curiosity withdraw the companion plate from the window and lock the pair away in a cupboard with every sign of satisfaction.

"I *am* glad it's the one with the boy's head on it," she said. "I've been trying to get the pair of them together for ages."

"Ho?" said Mr. Porlock, with a vague sense of dissatisfaction. "Ho, have you, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed!" she answered. "And to think I'd given up hope and was ready to sell the companion plate for seven-and-six! Why, if I'd sold it, I should have been a couple of pounds and more out by the deal."

"Ho?" said Mr. Porlock again, with a deeper feeling that all was not quite as he could have wished it.

"Yes, you see the gal's head pattern is pretty common. It's the boy's head one that is rare. Why that is, I don't know, seeing they were always sold in pairs."

"And 'ow much do they fetch nowadays in pairs?" demanded Mr. Porlock.

"Why, anything from four pounds up," she told him, evidencing a certain malicious triumph in the situation.

"Ho?" said Mr. Porlock, yet again. "Ho, hindeed? Strikes me," he stated forcefully, "I've been 'ad!"

"Nonsense!" retorted the lady briskly. "You asked me six shillings for that plate, didn't you? And I gave it to you without even trying to beat you down, didn't I? You got your price, and you ought to be satisfied."

"But you never told me—" irately breathed Mr. Porlock.

"It's no good getting cross," she remarked. "Have you got any more of these plates, by any chance?"

"No, I 'ave not!" he replied sullenly.

"You bring me a pair in good condition, and I might give you as much as seventy shillings for 'em. Now, that's a fair offer, isn't it? I shall have to find the customer for them."

"But I aint got no more of them."  
 "Pity," she said. "Where did you get this one?"

"I—I forget," replied Mr. Porlock.

"Well, I should try and remember, if I was you. There might be some more of the same sort, knocking about there."

"Why, so there might!" exclaimed Mr. Porlock, cheering up at this suggestion. "And if there are, and I can get 'old of a pair—"

"You bring them along here," she directed, smiling.

"Right you are!" he agreed, very cordially, and left the shop with obvious decision of purpose.

Outside, Mr. Porlock paused in cogitation, glancing first in the direction of the Royal George and then towards the harbor. Coming at last to resolve, he set off sharply for the quay.

ARRIVING alongside the *Jane Gladys*, he was gratified to note a complete absence of spectators. Stealthily he ran up the gang-plank of the *Jane Gladys*, and was making his way to the galley when to his chagrin he found himself hailed by Mr. Dobb, who had peeped forth from the fo'c's'le.

"Ullo," said Mr. Porlock, limply.

"Ullo," returned Mr. Dobb, and the inflection of his voice clearly intimated that he awaited an explanation.

"I—I thought you was up at the Royal George."

"I forgot something, same as you," responded Mr. Dobb. "I 'ad to 'urry back 'ere soon as ever I got there."

"Oh," said Mr. Porlock inadequately.

"What's the game?" demanded Mr. Dobb with some sternness.

"Well, I wont lie to you, 'Orace," said Mr. Porlock, after a little interval for thought. "I was going to your galley to drop a 'andful of salt into your teakettle, just to make you all feel a bit queer."

"Helementary," quoted Mr. Dobb, "Oh, most helementary."

His expression seemed to indicate that he was speaking ambiguously, but Mr. Porlock was not anxious to challenge his exact meaning.

"Yes, it was helementary, 'Orace," he abjectly agreed. "I'm glad now you caught me. Childish idea, it was, now I come to look at it. Only them shrimps— I'm too larkish, 'Orace," he broke off to admit. "That's my only fault—I'm too larkish."

"Larkish is a polite name for it," stated Mr. Dobb dryly.

"Anyway, you copped me and the joke's fell flat and there is an end to it," said Mr. Porlock. "And that reminds me, 'Orace, I 'ad the misfortune to break that plate them shrimps was on."

"Oh, did you?" cried Mr. Dobb crossly. "Serves me right! I ought to 'ave known you was too clumsy to trust with anything breakable. That'll cost you sixpence, my lad. Plates is dear to buy, nowadays."

"We wont quarrel over that," said Mr. Porlock, suppressing a grin. "'Ere's your sixpence, 'Orace."

Mr. Dobb, with a mollified countenance, accepted the coin.

"I'd 'ave took threepence, if you'd 'eld out," he confessed blithely.

"I aint going to 'aggle over prices with a old chum," asserted Mr. Porlock, with a sudden boisterous assumption of affection. "Fair treatment—that's what I believes in. There aint a squarer, less deceitful, 'armoniouser chap alive than me!"

"'Pon my word," said Mr. Dobb, "I almost believes you!"

"I'm sorry I busted that plate, though," remarked Mr. Porlock, "I'd took quite a fancy to it. I suppose," he suggested carelessly, "you aint got any more of them old plates?"

"No, I only 'ad that odd one to spare," said Mr. Dobb. "We only used it because it was a odd one. I've only got just the one complete pair left now. One's got a gal's 'ead, and one's got a boy's 'ead, like the one you broke."

"I—I'd like to see a pair of 'em," observed Mr. Porlock, compelling himself to calm.

"They are rather rum to look at," agreed Mr. Dobb. "I got 'em cheap one day, when we run short of crockery—bought 'em off of my old grandmother."

"Where are they?"

"'Anging up in the galley," Mr. Dobb informed him. "You see, my poor old grandmother died soon after, so I sort of 'ung the pair of 'em up in memory of 'er, seeing I never 'ad anything else from 'er to remember 'er by. Come and 'ave a look at 'em, by all means, if you're at all hinterested in 'em."

He strolled towards the galley, and Mr. Porlock, with a strange brightness in his eyes, alertly followed him.

"Blow, I forgot!" exclaimed Mr. Dobb, coming to a full stop. "The galley is



locked. I called out to Joe Tridge to lock it for me, when we set off for the Royal George, and 'e did so, and 'e put the key in 'is pocket. Never mind, 'e'll be back soon and then I'll give you a call and you can see 'em."

Regretfully did Mr. Porlock acquiesce in this program, and then, fearful lest eagerness should betray him, he went aboard his own craft. None the less, twice within the next half-hour did he come to cry down the fo'c's'le of the *Jane Gladys* an inquiry as to whether Mr. Tridge had yet returned.

"You seem very anxious," commented Mr. Dobb, on the second occasion. "Anybody might think it was a pair of prize fighters, and not a pair of plates that you was waiting to see."

Awakened to his indiscretion, Mr. Porlock mumbled something about finding time heavy on his hands, and then, drifting back to the *Raven*, he mastered himself into remaining inactive until Mr. Dobb's summons should reach him.

**H**ALF an hour later, Mr. Tridge arrived on the *Jane Gladys*. He was in careful conveyance of a flattish, circular parcel and handed it over to Mr. Dobb, winking freely. Mr. Dobb took the parcel straight into the galley, which, after all, had been unlocked all the while.

"Jim's brought the key!" bawled Mr. Dobb from his own deck, a minute or two later. And Mr. Porlock, who had been listening for no other voice, at once heard him and strolled on to the *Jane Gladys* with a fine appearance of boredom and indifference.

"There they are," said Mr. Dobb, leading him to the galley and showing him the two plates, prominently suspended.

"Oh, yes," murmured Mr. Porlock, yawning quite passably, and examining the plates with an overdone air of listlessness.

"I 'ope you finds 'em worth looking at," said Horace, "after all the fuss you've made."

"Fuss?" protested Mr. Porlock. "'Oo was fussing? If only I'd 'ad a book or a paper to read, I'd never 'ave troubled—Still, they are pretty quaint, aint they?" he conceded. "Blow me, it's quite hinteresting to try to decide which is the ugliest. I must say they strikes my fancy. Tell you what I'll do," he added, turning magnanimously to Mr. Dobb. "I'll give you a bob each for 'em."

"I should miss 'em if they was taken down now," said Horace.

"Well, I wont 'aggle, I'll give you 'alf a crown for 'em, and then, every time you sees their empty places, you'll 'ave a nice feeling remembering what a bargain you sold 'em for."

"If only I 'ad a couple more of 'em, I wouldn't mind," answered Horace. "As it is, I couldn't bear to part with 'em for 'alf a crown."

Mr. Porlock permitted a pause.

"No, I don't want to sell 'em at all!" suddenly announced Horace, to Mr. Porlock's dismay.

"Look 'ere—five bob!" offered Mr. Porlock.

"You seem very keen," remarked Mr. Dobb suspiciously.

"They—they fascinates me," explained Mr. Porlock.

"So they do me," said Horace. "You wouldn't believe 'ow fond I've got of 'em. 'Jim' and 'Mary,' that's what I calls 'em, when I talks to 'em sometimes," he added, with a ring of pathos in his voice. "It's very lonely sometimes 'ere in this galley, you know, and you'd be surprised what company they are for me."

"You want to break yourself of fancies like that," hazarded Mr. Porlock. "It's—it's bad for the brain."

"Let alone them being all I 'ave left to remind me of my poor old grandmother," continued Mr. Dobb. "No," he ended definitely, "I wouldn't sell them two plates for a five-pun note, that I wouldn't!"

The statement amused Mr. Porlock vastly.

"I don't think there's any call to go on talking about them plates," loftily said Mr. Dobb, making a pointed movement towards the door. "When it comes to laughing at a man's tenderest feelings of haffection—"

"All right, I'm sorry!" apologized Mr. Porlock. "But five pounds is so ridic'ulous! Now, if only you was to name a sensible price," he wheedled, "I might listen to you. I've told you I'm very took with them plates, and I'll very much like to 'ave 'em."

"And I've told you I don't want to sell 'em."

"I never was one to let money interfere with my likes and dislikes," stated Mr. Porlock. "Look 'ere—thirty bob! If *that* don't buy your grandmother's memory—!"

Mr. Dobb shook his head.

"Well, what *do* you want?" cried the other in high vexation.

"I want to get back to the fo'c's'le," was the oblique reply of Mr. Dobb.

"Two quid!" Mr. Porlock offered desperately. "When I take a fancy to a thing—"

"Look 'ere, I'll be as generous as you," returned Mr. Dobb, "I don't want to be a dog in the manger. Three-pun-ten!"

"Three-pun-ten!" shrieked Mr. Porlock. "Why, that's all—" he checked himself, and continued more carefully. "That's all nonsense. Look 'ere, look 'ere!" he pounded, lapsing again under the stress. "To oblige a old pal—thirty-five bob!"

"'Pon my word, Alf," said Mr. Dobb, exhibiting rare compunction. "I don't know that I care to sell to you at any price. You see, lad, owing to circumstances, I can't 'elp making you pay dear just for your fancy. Still, I'll meet you 'alway. Three-pun-five! There, now, aint I a true friend?"

"Two pounds!" snarled Mr. Porlock.

"No, no, no," disclaimed Horace gently.

"But—yes, 'ang it! three pounds, if you like, seeing it's *you*."

"Two pounds ought to—" Mr. Porlock was beginning again when Mr. Dobb strode towards the door. "Two-pun-five, bust you!" he ended furiously.

"No, I think not," mused Horace, shaking his head. "But suppose we say two-fifteen? I don't like to lose a sporting chance of driving a bargain, in spite of my poor old grandmother."

"Two-ten is my limit," stated Mr. Porlock.

"Oh, well, I never was a good'un at 'agglng," yielded Horace.

With hands trembling with eagerness, Mr. Porlock extracted the stipulated sum and handed it to Mr. Dobb. Then, clutching at the plates, he hugged them ecstatically to his bosom.

"And now—and *now*," he could not refrain from crooning, "*now* I've done you."

"I don't see 'ow that can be, Alf," said Mr. Dobb, looking puzzled. "You bought them old plates off of me, just because they took your fancy, and now you give me the price I asked for 'em, so 'ow can you 'ave done *me*?"

Mr. Porlock was moved to elucidate, but it occurred to him that it would be safer to postpone explanations till he were off the *Jane Gladys*. So contenting himself with projecting his tongue at Mr.

Dobb in a singularly juvenile manner, he marched out of the galley, and making for the quay, set off elatedly for Fore Street.

Scarce had he passed from sight than Mr. Dobb and Mr. Tridge likewise took their departure from the *Jane Gladys*. Mr. Dobb, strangely familiar with all the alleys and byways of the rambling old town, piloted Mr. Tridge by many short cuts till they came to a corner where Messrs. Lock and Clark were patiently waiting. Together, chuckling and wheezing happily, the quartet pressed on and reached a little passage which led to the back entrances to the buildings along Fore Street.

A FEW minutes later, Mr. Porlock, tenderly bearing a burden beneath his arm, entered the small secondhand shop. Again the elderly lady emerged from the back parlor to inquire into his business, and, according him a curt, unencouraging nod of recognition, she dispassionately watched him produce the two plates.

"There you are, ma'am," said Mr. Porlock heartily, pushing them towards her. "'Ow's that for quick work? Four quid, I think you said?"

She shook her head.

"My mistake," he corrected. "Three-pun-ten was the figure, now I come to think of it."

"I don't want 'em," she stated. "Not at any price."

"'Ere!" remonstrated Mr. Porlock in truculent alarm. "You distinctly said you'd give me—"

"I said I *might* give you," she interrupted. "As it 'appens, I've changed my mind now. I don't want 'em at all!"

Mr. Porlock began to exclaim passionately.

"You talk like that," she threatened, "and I'll call my husband to you!"

"*Do!*" he requested. "I'd like to 'ear what 'e'll 'ave to say about the way you've treated me. Go on, call 'im!"

The lady, opening wide the parlor door, stood back a little way and beckoned to someone within.

A moment later, Mr. Porlock, with bulging eyes and a jaw that had dropped helplessly, was staring at the familiar figure of Mr. Horace Dobb, framed in the open doorway. And over Mr. Dobb's shoulders there eagerly craned the grinning, delighted faces of Mr. Tridge and Mr. Lock and Mr. Clark.



# The Law and the Man



A vividly dramatic story of Chinatown, by the author of "The Other Key."

(by)

Lemuel L.  
De Bra

**L**AW," said the gray-haired special agent, "is an illustration of man creating something more powerful than himself. Law is a great millstone whose province is to crush whatever gets in its way. Man is not so relentless. There have been instances when I felt that it would be better to send the guilty person home to make a new start in life; but I was powerless. The law and the man—are different."

Customs Agent Marvin looked up from his *café royal* and smiled mysteriously.

"Say, Chief," spoke up the Inquisitive Chap, "if this is a story—"

"It's a story!" declared Marvin; "and if the Chief tries to skip over any of the things he did that night up the river, I'm going to speak right out in meetin'."

Because it was Saturday and the San Francisco Customhouse was closed for the week, we had lunched at a certain famous Italian restaurant, where in the dear dead days B. P., in the mellowing atmosphere of old friends, old wine and the aroma of good tobacco, the veteran hunter of men told us this story—the story of the woman who took the wrong road, and of the man who tried to save her from the crushing millstones of the law.

**E**VER since the big touring-car had left Bridgeport at nine o'clock that evening the rain had fallen in a steady downpour. It was now midnight. The old river road rose black and unbroken in the hazy gleam of the headlights; and through it the heavy car plowed deep, erratic furrows. The driver bent over the wheel, his eyes fixed on the road, his lips set in hard unpleasant lines.

Aimers, Chief Special Agent of the Customs service, sat at the driver's side. His cap was drawn low over his eyes, his face half concealed in the up-turned collar of his raincoat. Apparently the Chief was interested only in the driver's task of keeping on the road; but whenever the chauffeur leaned out to clear the raindrops from the shield, Aimers covertly studied the man's face, and frowned.

In the rear seat were four of the Chief's agents—three men and a woman. For a long time no one had spoken.

A light broke suddenly out of the gloom at one side of the road.

"What place is that?" asked the Chief.

"That's the Portage," answered the driver. "All-night roadhouse. I gotta stop here and get gas. This road sure hits the gas-tank."

"Don't stop in front of the place. Drive on past. You can walk back."

The driver did as directed. The instant he had left the car, Aimers spoke quietly over his shoulder.

"Marvin, when you ordered this car, did you give the garage proprietor any idea where we were going?"

"No, but I think he was wise. Of course, he wanted to know how long the car would be out. I told him all night. Then he grinned. 'I suppose you're Government men,' he said. 'Going down the river after smuggled opium. Well, I'll have a car ready, and I'll give you a man who knows them river roads like a book.' But the garage man is all right, Chief."

Aimers grunted. "I'm not thinking about him. Wait here." He slipped out of the car and hurried back through the rain to the roadhouse.

A porch ran the full front of the tavern, but owing to the rain, the only light was the one above the main entrance. Aimers stepped quietly onto the porch and peered through the crack between the swinging doors. In a glance he took in the whole interior—the deserted tables, the dance-floor, the bar on the right with its half-dozen men and women patrons. The driver was at one end of the bar, talking with the proprietor. The proprietor nodded; the driver stepped into a phone-booth.

AIMERS waited a moment, then silently pushed back the swinging door and stepped in. Without a word to the man behind the bar, he walked to the phone-booth. He heard the driver speaking.

"Is this you, Bill? Say, this is Jack Patton. Say, listen, Bill; I'm coming down there. You'd better get word to Joe, the Greek. I'm bringing—"

The Chief's forearm closed swiftly over the man's throat. With his left hand Aimers twisted the receiver from the driver's fingers and hung it up. He dragged the man out of the booth.

"So that's the game, eh? Tipping us off!"

The driver glared, but he said nothing. The men at the bar set down their glasses and started toward Aimers, but the proprietor spoke sharply: "Lay off there, boys; that's a Government man."

Aimers heard him. The success of the raid proposed for that night depended on absolute secrecy. For a moment the Chief was silent. Then he turned to the driver.

"Get that number again," he ordered. "Tell your friend Bill that you were cut off. Tell him you're coming with—with a bunch of good spenders. Get me? If you say a word to tip us off, I'll break your infernal back."

The chauffeur, with Aimers at his elbow, did exactly as told. When he had hung up, the Chief asked: "How far is it to Bend Point?"

The proprietor spoke up quickly: "Three miles, Mister. About a mile down this road you hit the river. It's two miles from there to Bend Point."

"You step out on the porch," Aimers told him. "Our machine is down the road. There's a man in the car named Porter. Tell Porter I want him. No tricks, now!"

The proprietor, eager to keep his house out of trouble with the Government man, obeyed promptly. When Porter came, Aimers quickly explained. "We need every man we have," he concluded; "but we've simply got to leave one here to keep this bunch from tipping us off. I'm going to leave you, Porter. You said this evening you didn't feel well enough to make a raid."

Porter stood for a moment in silence, the rain dripping from his long coat and making little pools on the floor. "All right," he concluded; "I'll stay."

"I'll phone you as soon as we've knocked off the joint," the Chief went on. "I'll have to send a car back for you."

"Don't need to do that," spoke up the proprietor. "As soon as you turn 'em loose, this bunch is going into Bend Point. Your man can go with them."

"Good. I'll keep them here only until I get to Bend Point. Take care of yourself, Porter. I guess you can do that." He turned to the driver. "Come on, you."

The proprietor lifted his lip in what was meant to be a smile, but his eyes were evil. "Good night, Chief," he called out.

"Good night," returned Aimers.

THEY passed out the swinging doors and plowed through the rain and mud back to the machine. When they were again on their way, the Chief explained to his agents why Porter had been left behind.

"Don't lie to me again about needing gas," he told the driver. "Maybe you know what it means to interfere with a Government officer, and maybe you don't. How much you learn about it tonight depends on how you behave from now on."



A few minutes later the road swung sharply to the left. From somewhere ahead the whistle of a launch came suddenly out of the night. The rain suddenly increased to torrents, and then as suddenly wore itself out. By the time the mud-laden car drew near the scattered lights of Bend Point, the stars were out.

Aimers turned to the girl in the back seat. Now that he knew what to expect of the driver, he spoke freely.

"Win, I'm sorry to have to bring you out on a night like this; but you see we have to land on this bunch when they least expect it. I've waited for just such a night as this."

"I understand, Mr. Aimers; and I don't mind a bit. In fact, I rather like it. But I hope there won't be any shooting this time."

"The opium smokers won't make trouble, but you can never tell what a crazy coke-fiend will do. You brought your pistol?"

"Yes."

Covertly, Aimers pressed the girl's arm in a signal. "Good. We'll stop pretty soon. Marvin, Brown and I will go ahead and knock off the joint. You sit right here. Keep your pistol in your lap. If this tricky driver makes a move, plug him."

"I'll take care of him," said Winifred Ellsworth grimly; and the Chief knew she could do it.

Presently, at Aimers' instructions, the driver turned off the road and stopped in the heavy shadows of a willow hedge. With a parting word to Winifred, the Chief and his two men disappeared in the direction of the river.

The place run by Joe the Greek was one of the most notorious of the river dives. It consisted of two arks anchored together in deep water about fifteen feet from the river levee. A plank led from one of the arks to the levee. In this ark Joe the Greek made his home. No one ever entered the other ark without passing the vulture-eyed drug-vendor. In case of a raid, the plank was quickly withdrawn from the levee, and the patrons of the place made their escape in small boats.

The place had long been suspected of being a distributing point for opium and cocaine smuggled in from British Columbia. Aimers had finally managed to get a secret agent into the den in the disguise of a hop-head river thief. Just a few days

previous to this night, the Chief had received his agent's report. He was astounded at the revelation. For the first time he did not take his men fully into his confidence; neither did he tell Winifred Ellsworth the real reason why she had been told to accompany them.

Following the rain, a strong breeze had come up the river from the bay. Aimers and his men struck out for a point on the levee above the two arks. They worked ahead steadily, silently. It was slow going in the darkness and ankle-deep mud.

When they reached the levee, Marvin turned toward the arks, but the Chief caught his arm. He turned up the river, following the line of the embankment. They came suddenly upon an old grain warehouse. Here they crossed the levee and dropped into the shadows of a willow clump by the edge of the black, gurgling river.

THERE Aimers left them, and stepped to the end of the warehouse wharf. He whistled softly. From the black depths of the deserted building came a low answer. An instant later some one crouched on the wharf above Aimers' head. It was his secret agent. They exchanged a few whispered words; then the man disappeared again. Aimers returned to his men beneath the willow clump.

Presently a large rowboat drew up to the bank where the men waited. The Chief stepped in. Marvin and the others followed. The man at the oars drew away from the bank, swung around and allowed the boat to drift slowly down the river.

"Chief," he said quietly, "I'll leave you fellows at the first ark. Then I'll pull down to the other ark and stand guard at the plank. There's not been much doing tonight, and there's only a dozen or so in the dump. I haven't been able to learn where the plant is kept, but there's a lot of stuff in the joint some place. Keep quiet now, everybody. The arks are just ahead."

The secret agent swung the boat nearer the river-bank, and set the oars against the current. Slowly they dropped down toward the two arks, indistinct blotches against the dark.

They were perhaps a hundred feet from the arks when from somewhere farther down the river a launch whistle blew an odd combination of sounds. The man at the oars straightened abruptly, then bent forward and sent the boat full speed down

the stream. "That's the signal!" he cried. "Some one has tipped us off!"

Aimers, more concerned over what might have happened to Winifred Ellsworth than over the raid on the arks, started to his feet, but sat down again, swearing under his breath. They could do nothing until the boat reached the arks. The man at the oars was doing his best, and the current was helping. The black hulk of the arks seemed to rise out of the river toward them. The sound of a splash reached Aimers' ears, and he knew that the plank had been withdrawn from the levee. In the ark nearest them an electric bell was sounding a strident warning.

Just as the boat carrying the Government men drew alongside the first ark, a door was flung open and dark figures crowded out on the steps that led down to the rowboats. The lights in the ark had been extinguished. Some one cursed as he fumbled in the dark for the ropes.

Aimers, with Marvin and Brown at his heels, sprang up to the runway of the ark. The Chief had his flash-lamp ready. He played a circle of light on the men crowding around the boats. "Back in the ark, you!" he ordered. "Quick now, everyone! Marvin, Brown, cover this bunch!"

The two agents stepped near enough so that their pistols showed in the gleam of Aimers' flash. The Federal officers knew that a prompt show of force and authority was the best way to prevent trouble. The men by the boats—there were four of them—hesitated an instant, then turned toward the open door of the ark.

Suddenly one of the four flung up his arm. A pistol cracked; Marvin felt the air stirred by one cheek. There was a splash. The agent stepped to the side of the ark and looked down at the black water.

"Let him go," the Chief called out. "Some crazy coke-fiend. He can swim ashore."

They passed through the low door into the ark. With his flash, Brown located the oil-lamp swinging from the ceiling and lighted it. The place was small but well furnished. There were a few tables in the center of the room; on each side were two opium bunks partly hidden behind stand screens of Chinese embroidery. A partition had been built across the other end of the ark, making a small room. Aimers tried the door of this room. It was locked.

"Brown, stay here and keep this bunch quiet," he said. "Marvin, get through to the other ark and grab Joe the Greek. Watch your step now! You'll find Davis at the outside door with the boat."

THE Chief's orders were punctuated by the sodden report of some firearm. It seemed to come from a short distance down the river below the arks. Marvin hesitated an instant, listening; then he hurried out.

Aimers watched him run across the plank to the other ark and disappear in a doorway. Then the Chief turned and rapped sharply on the locked door at his side. There was no response.

"I'm coming in," he shouted. "If you don't open the door, I'll break in!"

There was no sound in the room. Aimers stepped back, raised a foot and drove at the door. It seemed to be a flimsy affair. He made a shoulder lunge at it. It burst from the lock and swung back.

Aimers sprang back from the doorway and waited an instant. In the silence he heard another shot coming from down the river below the arks. Then, flash in hand, he entered the room. It was a bedroom. There was no one in sight. After a quick survey, the Chief stepped to where a cretonne curtain hung across one corner. He jerked it aside.

Crouched in the corner was a girl of perhaps twenty. She wore a raincoat and a rain-hat of the same material. She had large blue eyes and even features. For an instant Aimers was puzzled with the impression of having seen her before.

"Come out!" ordered the Chief.

The girl stepped out of the corner. There was grace and poise in her movements, but her voice trembled. "Who are you?"

"I guess you know, all right. Light that lamp!"

The Chief held his flash until the girl had lighted the small lamp that stood on the dresser. He snapped off his flash and put it in his pocket.

The girl turned to him with sudden decision. "Oh! Are you an officer? Yes, yes! I know you are. Oh, thank heaven! Now—now I can get away from this place. Tell me: did you arrest Joe the Greek?"

Before Aimers could answer, Marvin stepped into the room. "Chief," he said, "there isn't a soul in that other ark. Neither is there any sign of Davis or his boat. And there's shooting down the river."



"Davis can take care of himself," said Aimers. "You get back to our car. It must have been that driver who tipped us off." He stepped to Marvin's side and whispered: "When you find Winifred, bring her here at once."

When Marvin had gone, the Chief turned again to the girl. "I suppose you heard what he said about Joe the Greek?"

"Yes. Now—now what are you going to do?"

"Place you under arrest."

The girl shrank back with a little cry. "Me? Why—why, what have I done? Why don't you arrest the man who runs this place? He has kept me here, literally a prisoner. I—I thought you had come to take me away. Why should I be arrested?"

Aimers studied the girl's face. Her lips were trembling. There were large tears in her blue eyes.

"What is your name?"

"May Manning."

"Where is your home?"

"Kansas City. I came out here to visit an old friend. My friend died suddenly, and I was left friendless and penniless. I came to this place in answer to an advertisement for a companion to an old lady. I—I didn't know what sort of a place it was. I've been kept here ever since. Don't you understand?"

"Yes," replied Aimers slowly. "I understand."

"Don't you believe me?" cried the girl. "I tell you I've been kept a prisoner here. I've been literally a slave to that fiend Joe. I tried to escape, but he caught me and beat me unmercifully. Look!" She flung the raincoat aside, disclosing a neat dark skirt and a champagne colored waist of soft, transparent material. She loosened the waist, turned, and bared a white shoulder mottled with blue welts. "Look! See for yourself, if you don't believe me. I—I—" With a sobbing cry, the girl dropped into a chair and buried her face in her arms.

Aimers looked down at the weeping girl and shook his head sadly. "Tell me," he said, "are there any drugs in your room?"

The girl looked up at the officer. Her blue eyes were wide and questioning. "Drugs?" she echoed.

"Opium, morphine, cocaine. You know what I mean."

"Oh! There are none in my room. What would I have to do with them? I

do not know anything about this place. I have talked with no one but Joe the Greek."

"Where does Joe keep his keys?"

"I don't know. Wouldn't he take them with him?"

AIMERS made no reply. He heard footsteps outside. It proved to be Marvin. Winifred Ellsworth was with him, but at a signal from Aimers the girl remained where the prisoner could not see her. Marvin stepped into the room.

"Chief, it wasn't the driver who tipped us off. He hadn't moved out of his seat. Do you suppose something has happened to Porter back at that roadhouse?"

"We'll find out as soon as we can. First thing is to get through here. This girl has to be searched—"

The prisoner sprang to her feet.

"Oh, you will, eh? You big brutes! You'll do nothing of the kind. You are not allowed to search a woman. You don't dare lay a hand on me. That's the law."

"I'm not surprised to hear you say that," replied Aimers, a thin edge to his voice. "Lawbreakers are always the ones who cry loudest for the law's protection. You may as well save your breath. I know you. You've been under surveillance for a long time. You thought it was very clever to show me those bruises on your shoulder and claim that Joe the Greek had beaten you. Bah! Joe never dared lay a finger on you. Those marks were made by a negro woman who struck you with a mesh bag after she had been grazed with cocaine you sold her." The Chief raised his voice. "Come in, Miss Ellsworth."

Winifred stepped into the room. At once the eyes of the two women met and clenched. For a tense moment the men did not move, sensing the silent battle of the spirit between these two women. The Manning girl brought her head up, and her eyes glittered with all the hatred a woman of her sort feels for one who is not as she is.

"Step in the corner, please," said Winifred. Her voice was cool and authoritative.

The eyes of the prisoner wavered. She trembled, and with a gesture of utter resignation dropped back into the chair. "I guess I'm up against it," she said quaveringly. She turned to one side and bent forward. When she straightened, she held out a small bottle. "Here; you don't

need to search me. I know when I'm beaten. That's all the coke in the joint. Joe took the rest." From her corsage she took a key-ring bearing half a dozen flat keys. "Here are the keys. See for yourself. I'm through."

If the Chief was touched by the girl's sudden despair he did not let his voice show it. "Consider yourself under arrest, Miss Manning. Miss Ellsworth will take charge of you. The treatment you get from now on depends entirely on how you act. Marvin, go out and help Brown frisk that bunch. I'll go into the other ark and give it the once over. I wish Davis would show up."

IT was an hour before they finished the search. They found a few playing-cards bearing traces of opium, two opium layouts with pipes, a package of papers used to wrap up "bindles" of cocaine, a box of hypodermic needles; but they found no opium or other drugs. The three prisoners were clearly drug-users, but no drugs were found on them, and so they were released. Winifred had searched Miss Manning's room without success. The girl made no protest. She had packed a few things in a small satchel, had donned the raincoat again, and was sitting on the edge of the bed, crying silently.

In the meantime Marvin had gone out to a telephone and called up the Portage. Agent Porter answered. He said there had been no trouble there, and that no one had used the telephone. Marvin told him to come on in.

Because they had missed the night boat for the city, the Chief left Brown in charge of the arks, and the others went to the little country town hotel to wait for the morning boat, which was due at six o'clock. Winifred and the Manning girl occupied one room. The Chief and Marvin managed to secure separate rooms on the same floor. They decided to wait up in Aimers' room until Davis and Porter showed up.

The Chief took from his pocket the small bottle that the Manning girl had given him. The label bore the words "Cocaine Hydrochloride," and the name of an American firm. The bottle had been sealed with paraffine; and the usual narrow strip of gummed paper had been affixed over the cork. The bottle was full of colorless crystals.

"We'll mark this for identification and turn the case over to the Revenue authori-

ties," said Aimers. "Sorry we didn't get any mud."

THE Chief and Marvin had just finished marking the bottle when there came a rap on the door. Aimers slipped the bottle into a pocket. "Come in," he said.

Davis, the secret agent, walked in. The Chief introduced him to Marvin. Davis had been to the ark and had learned from Brown where to find the chief. In a few words he explained his absence. He had reached the lower ark just in time to see Joe the Greek shoving off. Davis gave chase. Joe fired several times, but finally Davis struck him down with an oar. Joe's boat was overturned and a certain tin box that was in the boat went to the bottom. The secret agent believed that Joe had saved himself by diving away in the darkness.

"Have him picked up whenever you locate him again," said the Chief. "Also help Brown make another search of the arks. I—"

There came another knock at the door. "Come in," said Aimers.

A man in raincoat, a rain-hat drawn low over his eyes, opened the door and stepped in. He looked from the Chief to Marvin and the secret agent, and hesitated.

"Hello, Porter," said Aimers. "Glad to see you on deck. Are you sure some one didn't telephone from the Portage?"

"Yes sir, I am."

"Well, some one did. Funny how we got tipped off."

"Did—did you arrest anyone at the arks?" queried Porter.

The Chief told him about the raid and the arrest of the Manning girl. "We'll take the six o'clock boat for the city," he concluded. "Be on hand."

Porter had already turned toward the door. "I will," he said, and left.

The instant Porter's footsteps had died away down the hall, the secret agent sprang to his feet. He spoke close to the Chief's ear.

"So that's Porter! One of your own men! Chief, here's a mess for you! On my way to this hotel I stopped at the telephone office to check the calls for Meigg's saloon, where that launch whistled. There were three calls from the Portage this evening. The last one was about the time that launch tipped us off."

"Must be some mistake," declared Aimers. "Porter is—"



"Just a minute, sir, if you please. There is no mistake. Will you listen? Last Sunday I followed the Manning woman down the river, where she had a meet. She talked with a man for an hour. When she left, I followed the man. I can go on the stand and positively identify him. It was your man Porter!"

"Davis! Do you know what you're saying?" Aimers had turned suddenly pale. This thing was unbelievable; yet something told the Chief that Davis was not mistaken.

IN the silence that followed, there came a quiet rap on the door. The three men turned and stared at the door, but no one spoke. Presently the door was pushed slowly open. It was Winifred Ellsworth.

"Mr. Aimers," she said, "Miss Manning wants to know if she may speak with you?"

Aimers turned to his two men and seemed to read in their faces the thought that had flashed into his own mind.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"In our room."

"Bring her in. Say nothing to her about these men being here."

Winifred closed the door again.

"Davis, get into that closet. Marvin, you sit right here. This girl is going to rap Porter to save herself. I want a witness to what she says."

Presently Winifred ushered the Manning girl in, then she waited in the hall. Marvin put out a chair for the girl, and she accepted it in silence. She was plainly overwrought. Her face showed signs of grief. She twisted her hands nervously.

"Mr. Aimers, I wanted to ask what you intend to do—with me?"

"You'll be taken before the United States Commissioner in the morning and charged with violating the Harrison Drug Act. The Commissioner will hold you for the Grand Jury, and we will then turn the case over to the Revenue authorities for prosecution."

"And the—the penalty—"

"Two years' imprisonment." It was the Chief's custom always to name the maximum.

The girl uttered a cry of despair. She put her hands to her cheeks, and for an instant they thought she was going to faint.

"Can—can nothing be done for me?" she stammered finally.

Aimers was touched by the utter help-

lessness in her voice. With him it weighed heavily in her favor that she had not resorted to the appeal of her sex.

"You are a woman," the Chief said quietly; "and to me it is always a terrible thing to see a woman in trouble with the law. But you have violated the law—a law that aims to stamp out this damnable drug-traffic. You must suffer the penalty."

The girl swayed to her feet. She was crying silently.

"Of course you will be allowed an attorney to advise you. Have you any money?"

The prisoner nodded, and turned toward the door.

Aimers glanced at Marvin, then leaned forward and spoke with ill-concealed eagerness.

"Miss Manning, have you any—friends, or relatives—anyone in a position to help you in this matter?"

The girl caught her breath in a dry sob. She turned slowly, and her blue eyes, steady and fearless now, met the Chief's without flinching. Breathlessly the two men watched her face, and waited.

"There is—no one," she said; and her voice held a new note—an odd blending of despair and determination.

When she had gone, the two men turned slowly and looked into each other's eyes. "Chief," breathed Marvin excitedly, "she's square! She never rapped!"

"She's square—or damned clever," admitted Aimers.

"She's both," said Davis, stepping out of the closet. "If you want the low-down on this, you'll have to get it out of Porter. She'll go over before she raps on him. Shall I beat it back to the arks now?"

Aimers gave his secret agent a few final instructions, then the man left. The Chief was silent a moment, his brow furrowed in troubled thought. Suddenly he turned to Marvin.

"Tom, you and I have known each other all our lives. We can do our duty without fear or favor because we've kept straight. No man or woman has a thing on us. Do you know anything about Porter that I don't?"

"He's absolutely on the square so far as I know, Chief."

"What about his women acquaintances?"

"He's straight there. I could almost swear to that."

"Almost—yes." Aimers stood up with sudden decision. "Come with me. We'll have this out right now."

They went down the hall to Porter's room, and rapped on the door. Porter seemed surprised, and no little alarmed.

"Lock that door, Porter," ordered Aimers. "I want a few words with you."

Porter did as directed.

"You told me that no one telephoned from the Portage after we left," Aimers began abruptly. "I have learned that a call came in from the Portage for Meigg's saloon just about the time that launch whistle tipped us off. The only phone in the Portage is in that booth in the barroom. What about that? Did you lie to me?"

Porter bowed his head. "Yes," he replied, so low Aimers scarce could hear it.

The Chief was taken aback by the admission. For a moment he stared at Porter, bewildered and dismayed. Then the muscles of his jaw hardened. There was steel in his voice when he spoke again.

"For two weeks I've had a man around those arks trying to locate their plant. In the meantime he discovered that the Manning woman was the head of the whole outfit. One Sunday he followed her. She met a man and talked with him an hour. Davis was a new man and knew no one on my force. Tonight he recognized you. Porter, what in God's name does this mean? You've compromised us! You've double-crossed us! You've—"

Porter flung out an arm. "No, Chief, no! I've not done that! I've been square. I did telephone and try to warn them. But I've not—compromised you."

"You've compromised yourself by—"

"Wait, Chief, please! Don't say it! I know what you think; but it isn't—that. I did what I could for that girl because—because she is—my sister."

Aimers sprang to his feet.

"Porter! You—you don't mean it!"

"It's true," repeated the man on the bed.

Stunned, the Chief sat down again.

"I don't understand," he said, more to himself than to Porter. "You came to us from the East with good recommendations. You've been one of my most active officers. And now—now—for heaven's sake, man, won't you say something?"

Slowly the man on the bed straightened.

"Yes," he said huskily, "I'll tell you. I want you to know that Dorothy is not—bad. I want you to know that I'm square with you."

"Dorothy and I were orphans. At fifteen she ran away and married a racing man. What does a girl of fifteen know of

the meaning of life? Still, it seems that her husband really loved her and was good to her, but the association was bad. Within a year Dorothy was using cocaine with the others in her husband's crowd.

"When Manning died, I tried to get Dorothy to come and live with me, but she wouldn't listen. She went East with friends, and the next I heard of her she had been arrested with others in a resort for drug-addicts. After that she disappeared.

"I didn't want to give her up. She was all I had. I could not think of her as anything other than my little sister. But I could not search without money.

"It was then I heard of the new Harrison Act, but I was unable to secure an appointment with the Government. Finally, through a friend, I was appointed to your office. I accepted it eagerly. I would be helping to put down the traffic that had ruined Dorothy's life; and some day—some day I might find her.

"Three weeks ago I located Dorothy living under her married name here in Bend Point. I have visited her several times. I pleaded with her to go back home with me. I offered to pay for her treatment in an institution. The last time I saw her,—that was the Sunday your man followed us,—she promised she would go away with me and start all over. I believe she would have done it. She knew it would be a fight, and she wanted to get money enough together to see it through. She was making about a hundred dollars a week selling opium and cocaine.

"But—it's all over now. I'm not sorry for what I've done for her. I hope you understand. Dorothy is not—bad. She got started wrong. I'm not asking for leniency. I know none can be expected. If the matter were entirely in your hands, I would go down on my knees and beg. But I know I'm dealing with the law now. The law—and the man—are different."

For a long moment no one spoke. Presently the Chief arose and turned to leave. "I'm sorry, Porter, mighty sorry. I'll do—what I can."

At the doorway of Aimers' room Marvin laid his hand on the Chief's arm, and asked: "Can we really do—something?"

Slowly, Aimers shook his head.

"I am afraid not. But it seems a crime to send that young girl to prison. Chief, we have a chance to save her. The law will make a criminal of her. Let's pour that cocaine down the sink."



Quietly the hunter of men spoke.

"She should have thought of all that before. She has violated the law that we have sworn to enforce. She must suffer the penalty. I'm sorry; but we can do nothing. Law is for the protection of society.

"Damn the law!" exploded Marvin. "Still, I guess you're right. Everyone in the river towns will know by morning that we raided that place and arrested this girl. If we don't present the case to the Commissioner, there will be a scandal."

"Exactly. Miss Manning's case will be presented in the morning."

IT was ten o'clock. Seated at the long table in front of the Commissioner's table were the Assistant United States Attorney, a court reporter, a deputy marshal and Miss Manning's attorney. On the bench by the left wall sat the prisoner with Winifred Ellsworth at her side. On a similar bench at the Commissioner's right sat Aimers, Marvin, and a few newspaper men. Porter was not in the room. Brockwell, the Assistant Attorney, arose.

"Mr. Commissioner, this is the case of May Manning, arrested last night at Bend Point by special agents of the customs while they were searching for opium. Miss Manning had in her possession a dram bottle of cocaine. She is therefore charged with a violation of the Harrison Act. In accordance with your recent rule, the Government chemist will first testify as to the contents of the cocaine bottle. Mr. Ayers, please be sworn."

The chemist took the oath.

"That is the bottle," said Brockwell, pointing to the one in the chemist's hand. "It had been sealed with paraffine. The officers marked the bottle for identification but did not open it." He took the bottle from the chemist and showed it to Aimers and Marvin. "You identify this as the bottle in question, do you?"

Aimers and Marvin acknowledged the identification.

"Mr. Ayers, you broke the seal on this bottle and tested the contents?"

"Yes sir."

"What is it?"

"Alum."

Brockwell swung around to face the Federal men. Both Aimers and Marvin were on their feet, surprise and chagrin pictured on their faces. Then, as though struck by a common thought, the three

men turned and looked at the prisoner. She had not raised the heavy veil that concealed her face. Her attitude expressed neither surprise nor relief.

Aimers left immediately and returned to his office. He was not pleased when he found Porter waiting for him.

"Your sister has been dismissed," said the Chief. "The chemist found nothing in the bottle but alum."

Porter stepped close to the Chief's desk.

"Yes; I know all about it. I heard you leave your room; and a scheme flashed into my mind. At first I was afraid it might make matters worse for Dorothy; but I decided to take the chance. I went to your door. You had left it unlocked, and the light burning. I knew you would return soon. I went in and began hunting for that bottle of cocaine. After a while I heard a heavy step in the hall. I hid in the closet. You came in. You locked the door. You sat down by the table. I saw you take that cocaine bottle from your pocket. With a match you heated the point of your knife and raised the paraffine seal and gummed strip. I saw you dump the cocaine into an envelope and put the envelope in your pocket. Then you took out a sack of alum, broke the alum into smaller crystals, and refilled the bottle, and sealed it again with a hot knife-blade. Then—then you went out again. Chief—God bless you for—what you've done for my sister. I told Dorothy. It broke her all up. She'll go straight now."

IT was the Inquisitive Chap who ordered more *café royal* and broke the silence that followed the Chief's story.

"What became of the girl?" he asked.

Aimers lighted a fresh cigar. "She made good. She and her brother have a fine home in—in the town where they live."

"Chief," spoke up Marvin, "you've certainly sprung a surprise on me. Never for an instant did I suspect that you put that alum in that cocaine bottle."

"Wait a minute!" the Chief broke in. When I went out the second time, I intended to throw the cocaine in the river, but was afraid some one might see me. I returned to my room, put the stuff in a glass and filled the glass with water, intending to pour it down the sink. When the crystals didn't dissolve readily, I tasted the stuff. Say, that chemist had it figured out right. Some one *had* bunked that girl with a cocaine bottle filled with alum!"

# Tower of Jewels



LIKE Childe Roland Rufe Dixon to the Dark Tower came—and he upset it.

*By*

Paul Fitzgerald

**D**UE east of San Francisco's Golden Gate lies West Oakland, where the transcontinental railroad systems terminate, and where the largest colored colony west of Chicago has its center. Many a pugilistic Ace of Spades has been dug up by white promoters from the West Oakland deck. Jack Johnson, Joe Gans, Walcott, Langford—each has performed in the West Oakland ring in the early days of his career.

From this foundation arose the Tower of Jewels, an ebony electrolier, six and a half feet tall, endowed by nature with abnormally long arms, and by a dentist with two rows of gold teeth. One after another, he bowled over the best that was offered him, until his effulgence illuminated the Bay region and put under total eclipse the famous pugilistic contingent of the C-P Railroad, to which line the Tower of Jewels did not belong.

Only one question remained. The Tower could box, and he could hit: but could he take 'em? To settle this remaining point, there rolled into the ring the "C. P. Squash," known of old as the "Stockton Cannonball," and all West Oakland was there to see the outcome.

"Ah don' care nothin' about no jack," asserted Mr. Rufe Dixon; "jes' you lead me to that Navigation niggah, an' Ah separates him from his ruddah!"

Mr. Ivy Williams remained unimpressed.

"That old Towah o' Jewels sure packs a wicked punch," he commented. "Man, that baby can *hit*!"

Mr. Dixon picked up a copper steamer, carressed it with a handful of waste and hung it back of the private-car range. "Ah shakes a mean glove mase'f," he reminded. "Ah sunk Gunboat Lee in foah rounds; Ah sparred with Sam Langford; Ah sparred with Joe Walcott; Ah sparred Li'le Artha'; an' Ah—"

"You done all that twenty yeahs ago; where you gets the idea you's so good now?"

"Ah aint gone back so far Ah can't last one roun'; tha's all Ah needs—jes' one roun', and Ah makes that niggah jump out o' that ring!"

Above their heads a buzzer sounded, and a white number dropped into view. Ivy removed his apron, paused a moment to compose himself, and then vanished down the corridor of the private car to learn the desires of the president of the C-P Railroad.

Rufe looked out of the window and noted with satisfaction that they were running into West Oakland. A panorama of cigar-stores, barber shops, secondhand clothing stores, and rickety rooming houses reeled past as they rolled along West Seventh Street. He noted groups of his own race and color standing on the corners and in front of billiard-rooms, and he beamed;



he glimpsed a two-story structure just off Chestnut Street, where lived his spouse and the five blackberries that adorned the family bush, and his smile broadened; he recognized at Seventh and Pine the café of Jerry Simpson, promoter of the West Oakland Athletic Club, and a block in back of it, the rambling pavilion whence for twenty years preliminary fighters had graduated into the big money. The vision recalled the topic of his conversation with Ivy Williams, and Rufe scowled.

Jeff Heard earned his sobriquet, "the Tower of Jewels," on his first appearance. When the announcer introduced him, a jaunty, good-natured young giant with a complexion of burned amber and arms that dangled down like the chains on a playground Maypole, he bared two rows of gold teeth that glittered under the glare of the arc-lights, and some wag in the gallery, recalling a certain architectural triumph of the Panama-Pacific Exposition, leaned over the railing and remarked:

"Well, if there aint the Tower of Jewels!"

THE name stuck, particularly when its owner knocked out Battling Kelly in the second round that night, and later disposed of a half-dozen likely heavyweights in as many shows. All the Tower had to do was to stick out his left hand, and the average fighter was held at a helpless distance.

Had the Tower of Jewels worked for the C-P Railroad, this story might never have been written; but the pugilistic freak was employed by the Pan-Pacific Railway & Navigation Company, a rival corporation. It was no part of the Tower's official duties to humiliate every representative of the C-P line who elected to box at West Oakland. Nevertheless he undertook the task as a purely personal accomplishment, and succeeded so well that for the first time in history the pugilistic contingent of the older road was in total eclipse. Which brings us back to Rufe Dixon, polishing his pans in the private car Lyncurgus.

"Dam' ol' Towah o' Jewels," he grunted. "Ah'll bust his headlight into foah millyun pieces; 'at baby goes out the ring feet first, or Ah finds me the reason why!"

The Valley Flyer panted into Oakland Mole, disgorged its passengers and then backed into the West Oakland yards, where it was boarded by a feminine army armed with brooms and vacuum cleaners.

Ivy Williams descended and took his associate by the arm.

"How you goin' reach his jaw?" he demanded. "You aint no higher than sea-level; you is built like a squash. You

"Man, you aint never see me jump. When Ah gets in 'at ring, o' Tower goin' goin' box on a ladder or how?" think he's fightin' an areoplane. Ah's goin' take him apart an' see why does he tick; Ah's goin'—"

"Hesitate, man, *hesitate*," advised Ivy. "You is a li'e toe, and you is goin' get stepped on; 'at's what's goin' happen to you."

"Am that a fact? Well, all Ah wants to know is: is you goin' to be in mah corner, or is you not?"

"Ah is, but Ah don' stand no funeral expenses. Ah trains you, and Ah spars you, and Ah cuts in on the jack, and Ah makes the match. You buries yo'se'f."

The C-P Squash grinned and extended one hand. "The arrangements is jake with me. Ah wrecks 'at ol' Towah o' Jewels in the first round; Ah distributes souvenirs in the second; Ah—"

"You is snorin'," informed Ivy. "You go' on home and get yo'se'f some real sleep."

He waved an airy farewell and vanished down Seventh Street, while Rufe, grunting wrathfully, turned and made off in the opposite direction.

MR. WILLIAMS' topographic characterization of his associate was more graphic than accurate. Rufe stood five feet and one inch above sea-level, and while he bore some resemblance, it is true, to a squash, the analogy was only true as to contour and not as to substance. He weighed one hundred and sixty-four pounds, and under the massive chocolate shoulders the muscles rippled as smoothly as in the days when the Stockton Cannonball, as he was then known, flattened such good men as Young Sullivan, Kid Hennessy and Australia Jack Kelly.

Rufe belonged to that peculiar class of Afro-Americans on whom the hand of Time rests lightly. He was forty-one, but barring an occasional touch of rheumatism, he was sound of limb and heart, and he had lived now for many years in comparative luxury with just enough work to keep him in trim. His desertion of the squared circle some fifteen years ago was not attributable to any other opponent than the

State of California. The Stockton Cannonball committed a slight error of judgment. He encountered a gentleman on the street for whom he had taken a dislike, and instead of making use of his fists, which would have inflicted indefinitely more damage, Rufe employed a weapon which is not recognized by either the rules of the Marquis of Queensberry or the Commonwealth of the Golden Gate. Wherefore he boarded for awhile at the expense of the public, and emerged a much chastened individual.

Thereafter the Stockton Cannonball became the "C-P Squash," an honest, law-abiding citizen of West Oakland, an employee of the railroad, a chef and gastronomic administrator to the requirements of President Thornwald Scott when the latter went on the road.

Now behold Ivy Williams parting the swinging doors of Tommy Simpson's café to impart the startling information that Mr. Rufe Dixon, recognizing the plight of his railroad, was prepared to lay aside his private inclinations and put a bomb under the Tower of Jewels.

Simpson was a shrewd promoter. Not until the question of emolument was satisfactorily disposed of did he show his enthusiasm. The California law forbids prizefights but permits four-round amateur contests for medals, and vests discretionary powers in the police. Wherefore if some perfectly disinterested collector of medals cares to buy them back for a sum sufficient to pay training expenses and other incidentals, why should a police captain who was born in Dublin and gets twenty tickets to each show interfere with the pleasure of West Oakland?

Ivy demanded only a modest medal, and figuratively, if not literally, the match-maker of the West Oakland Club fell on Mr. Williams' neck.

"Zowie!" he cried. "They'll draw like a porous plaster. I'll get half of San Francisco; I'll suspend the free list and make the general admission one buck."

"Huh!" commented Ivy. "Ah guess mebbe we better take a percentage on the house. We splits wif' the Towah on all over two thousand."

"Guess again," said the promoter. "You take the medal you signed for, or I'll bring out Young Sharkey from Salt Lake. I think I'd better do that, anyway. Why should I take chances with a coon who's been out of the game for fifteen years? How do I know that—"

Ivy Williams had dealt with white promoters before. He knew that he was helpless.

"You win!" he acknowledged. "Aint no use saying no mo', Mistah Simpson. Ah salutes the flag! Nex' Wednesday night we smears 'at ol' Towah o' Jewels fum heah to El Paso; we—"

"Good-by," said Simpson.

**D**URING the next few days, while Ivy Williams aided Rufe Dixon to limber up his muscles, the sporting fraternity awoke to the fact that a real heavyweight battle was in prospect.

Simpson advertised the card well, but there was no need in West Oakland. In twenty-four hours the news spread through every barbershop, pool-hall and grocery store in the district.

At once the arguments started.

"Boy, 'at's *some* match. Ah bets me twenty bucks on the Tower."

"Ah takes you. Ol' Cannonball's goin' cut off both laigs, and put him on the rip-track. Us C-P boys is goin' cash!"

"You's crazy!"

"Yah—an' you're talkin' mos' too loud!"

*Whambo!*

Along lower Broadway, in Emeryville, out on Twenty-third Avenue, and wherever the sporting fraternity had established its oases in the desert of commerce, the scarlet and green half-sheets of the West Oakland Athletic Club blossomed magically from fence and billboard. They appeared in San Francisco along the Embarcadero and out in the Mission, where rival promoters viewed them with ill-disguised envy.

"Jeff Heard *vs.* Rufe Dixon—the Tower of Jewels against the C-P Squash for the Railroad Championship of America!"

Truly it was a card worth while, and the sporting writers gave it generous space. They knew the Tower of Jewels as a freak of the prize-ring whose real worth remained to be tested. He could box and he could hit; there was no doubt about that—but could he take 'em? There was no one better fitted than the old Stockton Cannonball to determine that important matter. If Jeff Heard could get by the veteran bone-crusher then he was ready for a crack at the best in the business.

Tommy Simpson made only one mistake. He could have doubled his prices and got just as big a crowd; he could have rented the Civic Auditorium and filled it. By noon of Wednesday the house was sold



out, and the uptown agencies were clamoring for more tickets. The old habitués of the ring, men who had not patronized a fight since the days when the Gooner laid it on Jess Willard in the Eighth Street arena, reappeared that night and shouted their greetings across the ring. Their numbers were swelled by the newer generation of four-round fans, a breed that bets on corners and craves action every single minute.

The situation called for the exercise of strategy, and Simpson was a strategist. While the first preliminary was on, he located the Tower of Jewels near the entrance of the dressing-rooms. He was surrounded by a cluster of black pearls. The matchmaker detached the Tower from its setting and towed it to a secluded corner.

"Jeff," he said, "the cops wont allow any more standing room, and there's a thousand dollars out on the sidewalk."

"Mah goodness!" gasped the Tower. "Ah nevah see such a crowd in all my bawn days; Ah's some little magnet, Mistah Simpson—you goin' sweeten mah end a little bit, aint you?"

"Shut up," snapped the promoter. "It was my advertising that brought them here—good hard cash. Now, look here, Jeff: I'm not telling you not to do your best—but if you kill the Squash, you spoil a rematch that will be the biggest thing in California. Understand, I want you to give everybody their money's worth—no stalling; *but*—" He paused impressively, then concluded: "If by any chance the fight should go four rounds to a draw, well, you'll get a medal that will make this one look like the head of a pin."

The Tower of Jewels nodded wisely. "Mistah Simpson, you is a man aftah mah own heart. Ah plays that niggah for a fish; Ah takes him out an' frows him back again, until he grows a li'le mo'. Is you goin' acquaint him with mah intentions?"

The promoter frowned. He began to entertain serious doubts as to the wisdom of having said anything to the garrulous giant.

"See here, you shoelace," he threatened, "never mind what I said to you before; go on in there and fight your head off. If I catch you doing any stalling, I'll have you thrown out of the ring, and you wont get anything, understand? I'll take my chances on Rufe lasting; he'll probably break you in two!"

"Huh!" exclaimed the Tower of Jewels. His eyes expanded. "You is suah a funny man, Mistah Simpson, but Ah does jes' what you say. Ah lets him las', or Ah embalms him in the fus' roun'."

"Do any damn thing you want to," said the promoter. "I haven't said a word."

"Yas suh!"

**S**IMPSON went in search of the other party to the dispute. With the promoter, boxing was a business, and a mighty precarious one. The four-round game had been nourished through many years of discouraging difficulties; now it flourished only by right of sufferance. All his instincts rebelled against the prospect of having the Stockton Cannonball flattened without the formality of a re-match, especially with several hundred people out on the sidewalk unable to obtain admission.

He located Dixon in a far corner of the building. About the rotund negro was a retinue of dusky handlers—Hippo Johnson, Goldie Brown, Nate Clarke and several others. From this distant perspective of the ring they were shouting encouragement to Young Gans, a Seventh Street featherweight, who was undertaking the difficult task of taming Wild Bill Scott of the Fifth Street Free Market.

"Come here, Rufe," Simpson directed. "Now, listen: I want you to do your best tonight. If this fight goes to a decision, I'll re-match you for a show at the Auditorium."

"You aint talkin' to me," responded the Squash. "Mistah Simpson, there aint goin' to be no decision—jes' 'at ol' referee's arm goin' up and down ten times; Ah's goin' lif' 'at ol' Tower o' Jewels fum his foundations; Ah's goin' pulverize his skull in jes' one roun'."

The promoter of the West Oakland Athletic Association waved both arms and consigned the question of a re-match to the lap of the gods. He shouldered his way upstairs to make sure that there were no silver dollars trickling through any of the gallery windows.

The semi-wind-up was a rather tame affair between two awkward middleweights, and the crowd booed. When the bout was over, those in the reserved section stood up and stretched. From time immemorial, fight crowds have always so heralded the main event. In the semi-darkness of the crowded pavilion, hundreds of matches flared along the bleachers and

in the galleries, as masculine humanity rendered its homage to the great god Nicotine.

Dixon appeared a moment later, accompanied by the faithful Ivy Williams, Hippo Johnson and a pair of towel-swingers. The appearance of the C-P Squash was the occasion for an outburst from the old-timers and a few hundred representatives of his railroad. He took the reception nonchalantly, nodded at his opponent, and went over to a neutral corner to shuffle his feet in the resin-box. Then followed the introductions.

Into the ring climbed the official club photographer with his camera and flash-light gun. He set up his tripod and signaled to the little group in opposite corners.

The Tower of Jewels shed his bathrobe and came forward, pounding his gloved hands to soften the leather. The C-P Squash did likewise. They met in the center of the ring, and the seconds spread out on either side, leaving the referee in the middle, after the approved manner of all fight pictures.

"You feelin' all right, Mistah Dixon?" asked the Tower of Jewels amiably.

"Never felt better in mah life."

"'At's good," commented the Tower, "'cause you's goin' on a long journey."

THEY assumed a fighting pose, each with his left glove extended to within a few inches of his opponent's body. The disparity in their stature brought howls of merriment from the gallery. At the ring-side men prepared to shield their eyes from the blinding glare of the flashlight.

The C-P Squash focused his eyes on a point just above his opponent's belt.

"Ah may be goin' on a long journey," he whispered, "but Ah's goin' ride the cushions; an' boy—they's goin' ship you in a long box!"

The Tower of Jewels detected a significance in the position of Rufe's glove, as well as in the intentness of his opponent's gaze. He grinned.

"Take a good look, Mistah Dixon," he encouraged. "'At's all the close you's ever goin' to get to mah tummy."

"Steady," warned the camera-man. "Now, then—*quiet* everybody."

*Bang!* A puff of white smoke swirled up to the cluster of arc-lights. Trainers and seconds scrambled under the ropes. The referee, a sporting editor on one of

the Oakland papers, summoned the fighters into the center of the ring and delivered his instructions. It was a formula that both men knew by heart, but they listened with exaggerated attention. A wise man shows the referee every courtesy.

"That's all," concluded the official. "Touch your gloves when you come out, and make it snappy." He waved them to their corners, looked around to see that the ring was cleared, and nodded to the timekeeper.

"All right, Louis," he cried. "Let's go!"

The bell clanged.

OUT of his corner rolled Rufe Dixon, both red gloves extended for the customary handshake. The Tower of Jewels brought his hands up, lightly touched his opponent's glove and with a continuance of the same movement,—and then his left hand spat out like a snake's tongue and hooked Dixon squarely over the right eye.

For one amazed moment the Squash bounded back against the ropes, his grunt of astonishment lost in the disapproving hoots from the gallery. Then a black tornado burst across the ring, ebony arms flailing the empty air. The Tower side-stepped prettily, his long legs taking him each time into safety, his gloves moving lightly back and forth, awaiting an opening. Three times he pumped a straight left against the Cannonball's pudgy nose, and it began to mushroom.

Yells of exultation rose from the Tower's corner as he hooked another left to the face.

"Foh the Lawd's sake," entreated Ivy, "get in close! Where's all that areoplane stuff you was talkin' 'bout? Tear in, man, tear in befo' he decapitates yo' block!"

The advice was superfluous. No one knew better than the C-P Squash that it was suicide to remain any longer at boxing distance. He plunged forward, trying for the body with both hands, but the Tower of Jewels jabbed him off until his own back was against the ropes, when he fell into a clinch, lifted his stumpy opponent by the elbows and set him down again a foot away. The crowd roared in delight.

"Rock-a-bye, baby," sung a voice from the gallery. "When the bough breaks—"

The Tower nimbly avoided another rush, and drove two more lefts against Rufe's flattened nose.

"You's gettin' old, Mistah Dixon," he



jeered. "If you was workin' for a *good* road, they'd jes' 'bout give you a pension."

This final insult pierced the mahogany hide of the C-P Squash and wiped out fifteen years. Once more he was the Stockton Cannonball, the most dreaded man of his stature in the world. He backed into the center of the ring, the white of one undamaged eyeball menacingly displayed.

Twice he spread his wings and leaped into the air, exactly as a bantam rooster challenges his enemy. Each time the feint produced the desired result. A doubled glove struck out at him, and he measured the punch as it went harmlessly by.

Then, barely five seconds before the gong sounded, he dropped back against the ropes, spread his arms and charged forward. But this time the C-P Squash advanced in a manner the Tower of Jewels had never seen before—not straight ahead, but leaping from side to side with swings that were purposely short. The Tower fell back, jabbing nervously. He blocked two leads for the head, a right aimed at the stomach, and found himself cornered.

Just as the bell rang, Rufe Dixon brought a left hand out of nowhere and sank it into his opponent's stomach with the combined effect of cymbals and a bass drum. He cast one satisfied look at the Tower, collapsing into the chair that was hastily provided, and rolled back to his own corner.

**HENRY BOGART**, councilman for the Third Ward, sitting at the ringside, leaned over and addressed Attorney William Teed, two seats on the right.

"Just to make it interesting," he proposed, "I'll lay you twenty dollars even on the Squash."

Teed held a retainer from the Pan-Pacific Railway & Navigation Company.

"You're on, Henry," he agreed. "My man will live to lick Dempsey!"

The bell clanged dully for the second round, and the Squash bounded out, a black walnut protruding over his right eye, his nose broadened to twice its natural proportions. Once more he zigzagged across the ring, and his left glove thudded against the Tower's anatomy at a point just above the belt. The representative of the P. P. R. & N. locked his arm around his opponent and held on.

With malice aforethought the Squash tramped on the Tower's feet, sensitive feet

accustomed to patent leathers a size too small, and now protected only by soft boxing shoes. The Tower released one arm, jabbed viciously at the nose, and fled, pursued by his nemesis. In a neutral corner they locked again with the same result. More trampling on the feet, more retaliation on the nose, another flight.

The referee, whirling out of harm's way, hissed his disapproval at the Tower as the latter raced by.

"What do you think this is—a Marathon? Stand up and fight!"

For a moment the Tower did not reply; he was occupied in a give-and-take rally on the ropes from which he emerged panting.

"Yas suh, Mistah Referee," he acknowledged, "Ah's not doin' no Marathon; jes' you keep that niggah off mah dawgs, an' Ah'll bust him from heah to—*umph!*"

The final remark was prompted by another terrific blow to the pit of the stomach. The Tower of Jewels pulled himself together and summoned all his footwork to his aid. He boxed rings around his opponent. Like a cooper going around a barrel, he circled the Squash and played a tattoo on the latter's face. Each shot was a bull's eye that rang true against the nasal target. The gallery began to count.

Little Rufe Dixon was compelled to seek relief. He dived into a clinch and raised a smeared face to his opponent.

"Kain't you hit no place else but mah nose?" he demanded.

"Ah can," grunted the Tower, "but Ah aint goin' to, 'less you lays off mah stomach. Ah's goin' drive yo' nose clean frough yo' haid!"

The Squash wrenched himself free, swung futilely with both hands and came to close quarters again.

"Am dat a fac'?" he responded. "Well, you jes' keep it up, niggah—ma face against yo' stomach any old time. 'Fo' Ah gets frough you's goin' bend like a ol' haihpin!"

And trading punch for punch on this basis, the balance of the three minutes expired.

**T**HE third round will live in history as the fastest pace ever set by two heavyweights in the West Oakland ring. They neither asked nor gave any quarter; and while the spectators stood up on their seats and yelled as only a fight crowd can yell, the C-P Squash carried the fight to his op-

ponent. Staggering under a rain of blows to his face, he pressed doggedly forward with a sledgehammer attack on the Tower's middle story. Jeff Heard's ebony waist turned to a rich magenta; Rufe Dixon's features dissolved into a crimson splotch. The hand of Time entered into the equation and pressed down the scales against the Squash. Twice he slipped to the floor and arose wearily. The referee sprang in and out, alert for the end. Just as the bell sounded, Dixon swung an uppercut in the direction opposite to his opponent.

Ivy Williams sprang forward to meet his friend. His mouth sprayed a half-cup of ice water over the Squash in much the same manner that a Chinaman sprinkles laundry. His arms encircled the rotund figure and eased it into a chair. Hippo Johnson grabbed at the fighter's legs, draped them over either knee as he squatted in front, and fell to work on the cramped muscles. Goldie sluiced more ice-water over the heaving shoulders and pressed a crystal lump against the back of the broad neck.

"Ah's blind," moaned the Squash. "'At niggah's got belladonna on his gloves; Ah can't see nohow!"

Ivy jerked up his friend's head and stared into the one eye that remained open. The pupil was dilated abnormally. He bounded across the ring and clutched the referee.

"Foh Gawd's sake, wipe off 'at man's gloves," he pleaded, "else Ah sta'ts in to clean up right now!" He moved one hand to his back pocket, and the police captain sitting at the timekeeper's right hand snarled at him to get back in his corner.

Over in the Tower's corner they saw the referee approaching. Dextrously the chief second snatched a towel from an assistant, flipped it over his fighter's body and down the long arms. When the referee examined the gloves, they were clean.

"No funny stuff," he warned. "Last round, touch your gloves when you come up." He strolled over to the opposite corner and repeated the injunction.

The Cannonball's seconds were working against time. In the one minute that was given them they accomplished the seemingly impossible. They sent Rufe Dixon up for the fourth round, bleeding and almost blind, but with his head clear and his tired muscles capable of one more effort.

Attorney William Teed turned sympa-

thetically to Councilman Bogart. "A good little man against a good big man," he commented, "with the usual result."

The gentleman from the Fourth Ward pulled another pugilistic bromide. "The bigger they are the harder they fall," he said. "I'll stick with the Squash."

THE glare from the arc-lights threw into bold relief two black forms glistening under the final contributions of water. For the fraction of a second, as their gloves brushed, the men quivered in the center of the ring: the Tower of Jewels, with youth and height in his favor, and fame and fortune luring him on; the Squash, handicapped by age and the Great Architect, and sustained only by a blind loyalty to the old C-P.

Then they were at it again, hammer and tongs, in the final fling. Vainly Jeff Heard sought to keep his opponent at a distance, but the Cannonball was desperate. He plowed forward into the clinches, jammed the Tower against the ropes, and with his free arm hammered away at the stomach. Blow upon blow crashed into his swollen features, and still he clung there, a short black arm moving in and out like a piston.

The referee pried them apart and stepped back. The Tower of Jewels tried to straighten himself and couldn't. He had become a Leaning Tower of Pisa. His gaunt, elongated form was slowly bending. Up from the darkened tiers came the roar of the primitive man-pack. The Cannonball lunged wearily forward, deaf to the tumult, but dimly aware through one blurred eye of a target that was coming nearer and nearer.

He missed a right overhand swing, tumbled into a clinch, and whirled so that he faced his corner. Not four feet away Ivy Williams, his eyes projecting from their sockets, and both hands cupped to his mouth, was shrieking a message. Over and over the words cut through the vocal tempest until they penetrated the consciousness of the C-P Squash.

*"Bring it up from the floah! Bring it up from the floah!"*

Rufe Dixon nodded. With his remaining strength he shoved his opponent away from him, dropped his right hand to one shaking knee, and then, summoning every ounce of energy in his body, put it all into a right uppercut that smashed through the guard and caught the bending figure squarely on the chin. The gold teeth



clicked; the Tower reeled on its foundations.

Rufe Dixon caromed off his opponent, fell against the ropes, and returned to the assault just as the referee plunged into his pathway. The arbiter of the West Oakland Athletic Association managed to get hold of Dixon's right glove and hoist it in the air. Peering under the official's upraised arm, the C-P Squash made out dimly what was happening.

The Tower of Jewels was falling in three sections—first his knees, then his body, then his long arms. When the collapse was complete, he rolled over on his back, sighed and permitted himself to drift peacefully into the land where the little birds warble, and the fountains splash, and the stars twinkle in the daytime.

IN his private car as it rolled along the level floor of the Santa Clara Valley the President of the C-P Railroad perused at breakfast time his morning paper. With pleasurable anticipation he turned to the sporting page. On the day before he had defeated Walter Moore of the Burlingame Club on the seventeenth green by two up.

It was there, all right, a very happy reference comprising at least six lines.

Mr. Scott smiled and directed a tolerant eye to the balance of the page. Most of it was taken up by a description of the West Oakland fights, and in particular to the downfall of the Tower of Jewels at the hands of a representative of the C-P Railroad, who was apparently of far more importance, in the judgment of the sporting editor, than the chief executive of the system. Mr. Scott read on in silence. A few minutes later, he pressed a button, and Ivy Williams appeared.

"I want to see Rufe," he directed.

There was an interval of time, and the Squash edged into view, one eye still closed, the other striving anxiously to determine whether he was to be shot or complimented. The President's first words were not reassuring.

"Rufe, you've been fighting."

The single eye reflected the profundity of its owner's amazement. "Who, me?" expostulated the Squash. "No *suh*, Mistah Scott, Ah aint been doin' no fightin'."

The railroad official turned to his newspaper, and the chef of the private car Lycurgus, mentally condemning all sporting editors, felt the necessity for some explanation.

"Ah's jes' been fussin' round a little bit, Mistah Scott," he acknowledged, "jes' a li'le friendly boxin' match; tha's all."

The president of the C-P elevated the open pages until they screened his features. Rufe looked to his friend for advice, but the latter only elevated his shoulders. The situation was of Dixon's own making; he would have to solve it himself.

The Squash in his own way scaled the heights of diplomacy. He leaned over the table, his voice as mellifluous as any honey that ever vamped a pancake.

"Mistah Scott," he crooned, "how you like some nice Lake Tahoe trout this mawnin', with a li'le squinch of bacon?"

There was a moment of suspense, and then the paper rustled and was lowered. The President of the C-P Railroad regarded his servitor.

"And some buttered toast," he capitulated.

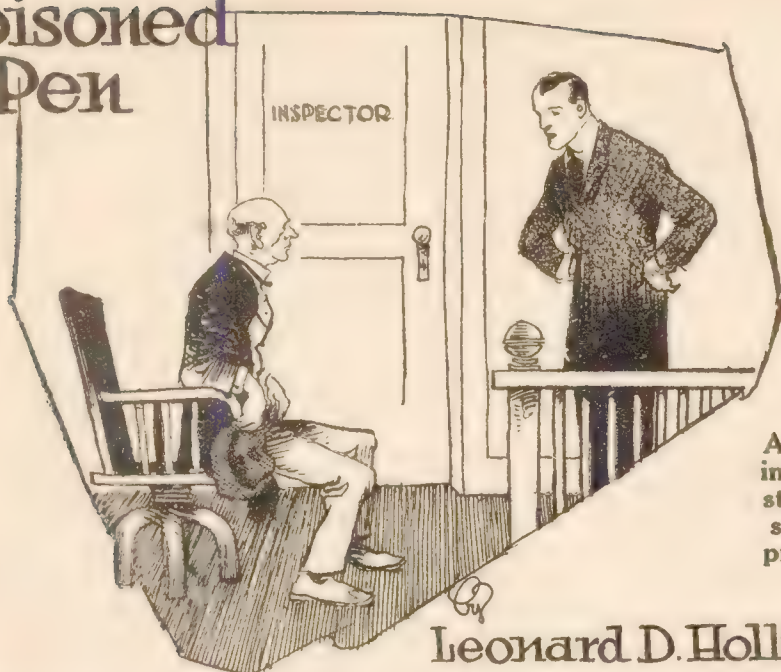
The Squash backed away, beaming.

"Yas, *suh*, Mistah Scott, yas *suh*! Comin' right up!"

#### A FASCINATING NOVELETTE

"**V**OODOO" is the title of a thrilling story dealing with the American occupation in Haiti, which William Almon Wolff will contribute to our next issue. And there will be many other deeply interesting stories by such writers as Frederick R. Bechdolt, Paul Fitzgerald, H. Bedford-Jones, Clarence Herbert New, Gladys Johnson, Robert J. Casey, F. Morton Howard and George Allan England.

# Poisoned Pen



A postal inspector strikes a strange problem.

Leonard D. Hollister

**P**ERHAPS you've never noticed it; in all probability you never knew that it existed. Yet in every post office of anything approaching metropolitan size is a little secret passageway which protects you without your knowledge, that serves as the buffer between temptation and the carrying out of the evil promises which dishonesty holds forth—a little gallery where the post-office inspectors take their turns at the tiresome job of espionage, to protect the mails.

The windows of that little gallery are hidden; they cannot be seen from the big mailing-rooms below. But their vista is wide, their range of vision long—from them one can view the whole interior workings of a post office; and the clerk who stops to feel a letter for the softness of currency enclosed can be spotted as easily as though the observer were within three feet of him. It is a requirement of the post office inspection department—that that great, plodding, unostentatious ferret organization which safeguards the mails, both from within and without, for inspections to be made from the "gallery" at regular intervals, simply as a routine procedure. No one is suspected; the post-office inspector who stands guard behind the disguised, concealed window hopes that there will be no one who will deserve suspicion; for the men who are working

below are his fellows, his co-employees, his partners in the tremendous task of seeing that Uncle Sam's burden of mail reaches its destination without delay and without damage. Yet it is a necessary thing, and it is done.

Ralph Harris had been on watch for three hours now, sitting behind the little window which looked out upon the tremendous chutes, the racks and long tables of the mail-room below. Fifteen minutes remained of his watch, until another inspector was to take his place—fifteen minutes of routine, cursory examination without result, merely the procedure which must be gone through in keeping with the regulations.

All at once Harris' serenity departed: he leaned close to the window and watched with the intensity that only a man who is on the scent of criminality can know.

**B**ELOW Harris, a clerk had taken a letter from the mass which he was running through the canceling machine and held it to the light, then studied it a moment before he returned it to the pile of the missives which lay on the table. Harris had seen such actions before; they usually were the preliminary to petty pilfering from the mails, the stealing of envelopes containing money sent without the protection of money orders or registry. The post-office inspector turned away from



his post of duty with a feeling of downheartedness. It always hurt him to discover some one tampering with the mails. But when he reached his office, his expression changed. For the same clerk whom he had seen examining the letter was awaiting him.

"The inspector in charge isn't here, is he?"

"No—went home several hours ago."

"Can you take his place?"

Harris looked rather sharply at the clerk. "Certainly."

"Then,"—and the mail canceler smiled,—"I guess I've got a case for you."

"So?"

"I don't know—it's just guess work on my part. But are you investigating any sort of a black-mail matter in regard to the Kenneth Clawsons?"

"No. Why?"

THE mail-clerk hesitated. "Well," he said at last, "I can't say. It's just a hunch on my part. A couple of weeks ago I happened to be running the mail through the canceling machine, and a letter stuck. I took it out of the regular bunch, and by accident I got it between me and the light. It was just a cheap envelope, and thin. There wasn't any return address on it, and it was in typewriting. As I say, I got it between me and the light, and something made me take a second look. I happened to see the words '*I'll expose you.*'"

"Naturally, I didn't think anything of it. I hand-canceled the letter and shoved it back in the regular bunch. A couple of nights later another one came through, addressed in the same way and in the same envelope. I guess curiosity got the better of me, and I looked again. But this time the letter inside was folded in such a way that I couldn't see anything. Two nights more, and another one came. I looked at that too, but the writing was concealed. And they've been coming every day or so. The fact that they were always the same, always typewritten without a return, always in the same batch of mail—well, my first experience led me on, and I've looked at all of them. I know it's against regulations, but I believed I was doing the right thing. And tonight the letter happened to be folded in the same way as the first one. For a minute I put it back in the regular mail. Then the more I thought of it, the more I felt I ought to bring the thing to you. Look!"

HE brought forth a flimsy cheap envelope from his pocket and handed it to the post-office inspector. Harris took it, looked at the typewritten address, then snapping on a powerful light over his desk, held the envelope against it. For a moment the typewritten words within were indistinct; finally they resolved themselves into one line which protruded above the fold of the missive and which could be discerned through the covering of the envelope:

*I warn you I am a desperate man and unless I get the money—*

Harris nodded.

"Thanks for breaking the rules," he said at last. "This looks like blackmail. Take the letter back and run it through in the regular way. Posted at Station A, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but that doesn't seem to mean much. I've watched that. They seem to be mailed from various parts of the city—but always about the same time, after six at night. I always got them in the first or second run."

"All right. Let me know if any more come through. I'll start an investigation and see what I can learn from the Clawsons."

The clerk went out, and Harris sank back in his chair, relieved. At least he did not have to face the disagreeable duty of sending some mail-clerk to the penitentiary for yielding to the temptation held before him by the careless senders of money. As for the clue which had been brought to him—

Harris reached for his hat and left the office. A half-hour later he rang the bell of the big, rambling, old-fashioned Clawson home, far out in the residence district of the city.

"Mr. Clawson, please," he announced when the maid answered his summons. Then a moment later, in the old-fashioned parlor, he faced a tall, rather hard-featured man who looked at him with suspicious eyes and who inquired sharply as to his mission. Harris rose.

"I'm from the Post Office Department," he announced, pulling forth his case and showing his card-commission. "If I'm not mistaken, you've been receiving some rather mysterious letters?"

"Nothing of the kind!" Kenneth Clawson snapped out the words, a denial, which to Ralph Harris was a strict affirmation of his statement. The inspector smiled.

"Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. It's your wife who has been receiving them."

"You're entirely mistaken!"

"May I see Mrs. Clawson?"

"It's impossible. She's ill."

"As a result of these letters?"

Clawson glared. "I don't know what you're talking about; we've been receiving no letters, and if we had, it wouldn't be any of your business!"

"I beg your pardon—it would be very much of my business if those letters happened to contain anything in violation of the postal laws. It's a penitentiary offense to send Black Hand or poison-pen matter through the mails, and while I do not want to appear insistent, Mr. Clawson, haven't you or your wife received within the last few weeks a number of letters making demands for money?"

Again came the glare from the eyes of the hard-featured old man.

"There hasn't been a speck of mail come to this house that hasn't been right and proper. As I remarked before, you're presuming."

"For which I apologize." Harris rose. "It must all be a mistake."

**B**OWING, he left the house, to hurry once more for the post office and the mail-room.

"That letter," he ordered as he approached the clerk. "Find it and bring it up to me with a receipt. I want to hold it for the inspector in charge."

"Yes sir." Fifteen minutes later the clerk reported at the inspector's office to turn over the thin, cheap envelope to Harris, to accept his receipt for it and to depart to his work of the night. The inspector held the missive again to the light; then, carefully depositing it in the safe, he went home. Next morning he faced the inspector in charge.

"Chief," he announced, "I'd like an order to open some mail. Looks like Black Hand."

"Sure?"

"Yep. Know Kenneth Clawson?"

"Do I?" The Chief laughed with reminiscence. "He's a miser. That man's made more nickels squeal for mercy than any other ten men in the United States. Married a choir-singer about five years ago. Very proud of himself and hates a newspaper as a rat hates poison."

"Thanks. I thought so. I've got a let-

ter here that looks very much like a demand for money—but he's trying to keep it quiet. A postal clerk brought it up to me last night. It's addressed to Mrs. Clawson, and according to the clerk, the same kind of letters have been coming through for the last two weeks. Take a look." He held the letter to the light, and the Chief squinted. Then the inspector in charge made out the formal order for the opening of the envelope. Together they carefully steamed it and unfolded the typewritten paper which lay within. Then they grunted. For suspicion had been correct:

*This is the fifth letter I've written you, Mrs. Lucy Clawson. I'm going to write five more. I want you to get in the proper atmosphere for receiving my demand. I want you to fully realize just what kind of a woman you are, and how your downfall is going to drag you and your husband down into the mire.*

*I want money. I'm not going to tell you how much now. But I warn you I am a desperate man, and unless I get the money, you'll suffer for it. And that sniveling, pious, sanctimonious husband will suffer with you.*

*I know you to be a far different kind of woman from that which you pretend to be. Your husband knows your record, and yet he poses as a pious pillar of the church and sneers at ordinary sinners. Will he still sneer when I get through with him? And will you sneer?*

The Chief smiled grimly. "Writes like an educated man," he commented. "Let's see what the rest says."

They read on:

*I know all about how you married and robbed young Lawrence Hannerton. Nice little mess, wasn't it? I know all about the scrape you got into over that stolen necklace. How would you like to see that in the papers? And what about the fact that you are now a fugitive from justice on a charge that you have a habit of marrying without going through the formality of a divorce from a prior husband?*

*Don't think I'm afraid to write you all this. I'm not taking the slightest risk in the world. You won't go to the authorities with it. You're afraid, and your husband's afraid. If you go to the authorities, the papers will get hold of it. The minute they do that, I'll send them carbon copies—anonymously, of course—of all these letters. And they'll print them. What's more, they'll look up the facts and print them too.*

*And don't think either that I'm simply going to walk into a newspaper office and ask them to print my story if you don't do as I wish. There's another method which is much easier and which absolutely insures publication. It only costs two or three dollars to*



*file an alienation suit, you know, and I have plenty of grounds. My wife never would have lost her love for me if it had not been for companions she met through you. So just let that sink in. You won't forget—I'll take care of that!*

*Your Nemesis.*

The inspector in charge looked curiously toward Harris, then flipped the letter thoughtfully for a moment.

"A nice little combination of poisoned pen and Black Hand," he announced at last. "Here, take it and seal it again. Then chase downstairs with it and see that the carrier gets it for delivery on the morning round. As you go out, send Grueblin in to me."

HARRIS nodded and obeyed, stopping for a moment at the outer office to inform a fat-faced, grinning, likable-appearing young inspector that the Chief desired an interview in the inner office. When he returned from his mission, the interview was over and the Chief was leaning back in his chair, thoughtfully studying the ceiling. He turned his head at the entrance of Harris.

"Never mind doing anything more on that Clawson case today," came his order. "Better spend your time looking up some of those old land-frauds. They're piling up on us pretty heavy. Don't get into anything that will take you out of town, though. I'll want you around here if Grueblin has any luck."

"Is Grueblin on the case too?"

"I hope so, by this time. If things work out all right, a new grocer boy's going to begin delivering the daily food at the Clawson home this afternoon; and furthermore, I think that before another day is over, he'll be taking the cook to a motion-picture show and have the low-down on any other servants that happen to be around the house. Grueblin's got as fine a little system of jazz for that sort of thing as I ever struck. It's what we need right now, Harris. There's no use in trying to get anything out of old man Clawson. He'd suborn the worst kind of a felony before he'd let his name get into the papers. His wife's evidently suffering from hysteria, and we can't reach her. It'd probably only gum up the cards if we did. So our big chance lies in what Grueblin can find out, and what the rest of these letters show. You got that tender little missive into the postman's hands, didn't you?"

"Yes—caught him just as he was starting on his route."

"Good! We'll work better in the future. Those things have been coming through on the first or second run after six o'clock, haven't they? Very well; you and I will stick around here each night until those runs are over. Then if any of the letters show up, we can read 'em, copy 'em and have 'em back in the mail in a half-hour. Meanwhile we'll see what Grueblin turns up."

Harris turned to his land-fraud cases. That night he met the inspector in charge in the office after hours and waited. But no letter came, and no word from Grueblin. Another night, and the postal-clerk brought up a second missive, in the same kind of envelope as the first. They read it and returned it to the mails, carefully re-sealed. It had contained nothing more than the first, a streaming epistle of invectives, of threats, of venomous hatred. Two days more, and another appeared. It was little different, except that it explained in stronger language the various escapades of which the young wife of the miserly Clawson was accused.

ON the afternoon following it was Grueblin who stood at the inner office door when Harris answered the knock—Grueblin, with a young woman by his side. They entered, and the three drew chairs to the Chief's desk.

"This is Sadie," announced Grueblin with the air of a man who had told enough. "Sadie's turned out to be a darned good friend of mine. She's the maid for the Clawsons. Haven't many servants there—only Sadie and a cook."

"I'll say they aint!" announced Sadie with feeling. "And they wouldn't have us if we wasn't a couple of darned fools. I've said to myself more times than once that I was workin' my life away there for about half of what I could get anywhere else—but you know how us girls is; once you get a place, you just hate to go out and look for another one."

"Sure!" Grueblin was doing the talking. "Isn't that just what I told you last night at the picture-show? Clawson don't let go of much money for anything, does he?"

"I'll say he don't."

"Weren't you telling me that he tried to palm off a bum half-dollar when he paid you last week?"

"I'll say he did!" Sadie said it with her nose in the air.

"Well, listen, Sadie: Just as I told you—these gents are friends of mine, and they're looking up Clawson a little. So you just go ahead and spiel them all that dope you were telling me."

The Chief and Harris said nothing. There was no need. One person and one alone owned Sadie—the genial, fat-faced Mr. Grueblin. The maid forgot the others, to turn and talk directly to him.

"Well, just like I was telling you, I was going upstairs a week or so ago—now, lemme see what night it was—"

"Never mind that. Just wade in. You were going upstairs—"

"Yeh, and I had on my slippers, so I wasn't making any noise. All of a sudden I stopped right on the landing, because there sure was goings on in the Missis' room."

"Talking things over, were they?"

"I'll say they were. I couldn't catch much of what it had all started about, but I kept hearing something about a letter. You know, old man Clawson opens every bit of mail that comes to the house, whether it's for him or not. Always acts to me like he was afraid somebody'd try to vamp that wife of his. She's about thirty years younger than him, you know."

"Sure. And you said they were scraping?"

"I'll say they were. He was sorer'n a goat about something, and was asking her a lot of questions about a man—I couldn't catch his name. For a long while she denied everything. And then she just busted loose and admitted she'd been just a plain crook and thief and bigamist and everything else and that if the old man wanted to, he could go and get a divorce.

"Well, that kind of squelched him for a minute."

"Hear anything more, Sadie, besides Mrs. Clawson's confession that these letters, whatever they were, were true, and that the old man was going to hush up the writer?"

"That's about all—except that there was a lot of interesting talk while the information was bubbling forth. I'll say I got an earful."

"I'll say you did," paraphrased the genial Mr. Grueblin. Then he looked at his watch. "We've just about got time to take in a picture-show before your time's up. Are you on?"

"I'll say I am," said Sadie, and she vanished out the door with her grinning companion. The Chief looked toward the inspector.

"Same old story," he announced. "Old husband, young wife. Marries her simply because she's got a pretty face—never thinks of her character. Somebody spills the beans, and the husband gets the dope. Only, in this case, if I know Clawson, he's going to spend his last cent to keep it quiet. He's gone too far now to do anything else."

Harris strode to the window and stood for a moment looking out.

"I've got a funny idea about this case," he said at last.

"Which is?"

"Too darned funny to tell. You'd laugh at me. Guess I'll take a turn around town."

THAT night they met, again to read a letter filled with invectives, teeming with ridicule—a letter filled with poisoned thoughts, of a type to eat into the resistance of a person, to weaken it to the breaking-point.

One of them arrived three nights later. Two nights after that Harris and the Chief bent low over the fifth of the missives. Then Harris went to the desk.

"Ready," he announced. "Read it slow, so I'll get it all."

"All right; here goes: 'This is the end, Mrs. Lucy Clawson, either the end for me or the end for you. There is no need to go into much detail. You know why I am writing this letter. I want a hundred thousand dollars. Does it sound like a lot of money? Very well; just let that husband of yours figure how much this will cost him if he doesn't pay it. Let him take the law of averages, and he'll see that my price is cheap.

"You know why I want the money, and you know what I'll do if I don't get it. So it's up to you. And you'll pay it—at least your husband will. If he doesn't both of you will get all that's coming to you.

"I will be expecting one of you to turn the corner of Eighth and J streets Monday night at ten o'clock. You will walk fifty feet past the Barnes junk-yard to a spot in front of a little grocery store, where a bread-box stands unlocked. I want you to drop the money in there, and I'll do the rest.

"And don't try any fakes. Don't try to have me arrested. Drop that money in



that bread-box in a package containing a hundred one-thousand-dollar bills. Otherwise I'll squeal, and I'll tell everything I know, which is a lot. As ever, Your Nemesis."

The copying concluded, the Chief folded the letter and returned it to its envelope.

"Ready yet to tell what your hunch is?"

"Not by a jugful." Harris smiled in a deprecatory manner as he said it. "The darned thing's too liable to turn out wrong. Is that all?"

"Yep—until you've made the clean-up, whatever it is."

HARRIS didn't answer. Instead, he turned for the door and left the office, not to return until the next afternoon. Then it was only for a moment, to check up with the Chief, to assure himself that the necessary aid would meet him an hour before the time appointed by the letter, and to learn from Grueblin that the quarrels had continued in the Clawson house without any hint of a turn in the decision to pay the unknown blackmailer rather than submit to the tortures of publicity. Harris moved on, to stroll about town for awhile, eat a leisurely dinner, and then—

It was nine-thirty when he took the trail of the hard-faced Kenneth Clawson as the miser came forth from his big house and started hurriedly down the street toward a car. It was nine-fifty-five when he alighted at Eighth and J streets, just a few feet behind the man whose right arm, pressed tight against his coat, gave evidence of a package concealed there. Slowly Clawson looked about him as he reached the sidewalk, eying Harris carefully as the inspector sought the shadows and walked leisurely up the street, keeping continuously in the darkness, so that the old man might not recognize him as the man who once had asked very pointed questions about blackmailing letters. A cigar-store was open. Harris stepped inside and bought a package of cigarettes. When he stepped forth again, Clawson had disappeared down the darkness of J street toward the junk-yard and the bread-box. Nor did Harris follow.

Five minutes passed; and then—

The shrill warning of a police whistle, the patter of feet coming from the darkness of J Street, and Harris leaped into action. A second later a hurrying man turned the corner, stuffing a package into his shirt as he ran. Harris doubled, then plunged

—like a football player in a tackle. His arms caught tight about the knees of the man, and the fugitive hurtled over him, to scramble vainly, to beat against the inspector's head and shoulders with his fists, to curse—then to lie panting and silent. Other forms had come around the corner. One of them had a flash-lamp—which displayed the further fact that both carried revolvers in readiness for action. Harris clambered to his feet.

"Take him to Headquarters," he ordered, "and hold him there. Do you know what luck Brady had?"

"With that other party?" asked one of the detectives. "No. He was just starting up there when we left him. Don't think he ought to have any trouble, though."

"Hope not," said Harris of the Post Office Department. "Better frisk this bird before you call the wagon. He's liable to be carrying a gat." Then he ran for a street-car headed toward the Federal Building.

SHORTLY after midnight Harris stepped onto the veranda of the Kenneth Clawson house. A moment later the door opened, and Kenneth Clawson glared at him.

"I haven't got time to talk to you!" he said excitedly. "My wife's—"

"Disappeared," answered the post-office inspector casually. The other man stared.

"How do you know?"

"Also the two servants. You came home to find everyone gone."

"Yes. Where are they? What's—"

"Rather poor home-coming, wasn't it—after parting with a hundred thousand dollars to keep those little escapades quiet?"

"You—you—"

"You mean to ask me if I know? Sure I do. And I'd suggest to you, Mr. Clawson, that if you're really eager to see your wife, you'd better come with me."

The man obeyed breathlessly. When they reached the office of the inspector in charge, the aged millionaire stared about him tensely, excitedly.

"I thought you said—"

"That if you wanted to see your wife, you'd come along. Exactly. Please have a chair. First of all, Mr. Clawson, kindly remember that in spite of your efforts to keep this little affair quiet, you didn't do it. You're now in danger of going to the penitentiary for suborning a felony, unless you walk the straight and narrow path.

The inspector in charge desires that I ask you a few questions."

White-faced, Kenneth Clawson sat and stared at the post-office inspector. Harris smiled, then drew his chair closer.

"First of all, Mr. Clawson, when and where were you married?"

"But—"

"You heard what I asked you. Answer that question, please."

"I was married," came the dull answer, "five years ago, to Miss Lucy Winthrop, a choir-singer."

"How long had you known her?"

"Six months—ever since she had been at the church."

"Where did she come from?"

"Boston, I think."

"Ever check up on that?"

"Of course not."

"Naturally. You're a millionaire who looks after every little item of money, and will chase a man ragged to get his Dun and Bradstreet rating. But with a little thing like a wife—of course that never entered your head. Now, since you've been married, how much money have you given her?"

"That's an impertinent question."

"I'll admit it sounds so. But on the contrary, it's very pertinent. But if you wont answer it yourself, I'll answer it for you. The amount was very small. And you simply refused to die. And there wasn't a chance to get a divorce. And—well, what else could you expect, not a choir-singer, but a very neat, nifty little burlesque chorus-girl, who'd married for money, to do?"

WHILE the old man stared, Harris reached toward the Chief's desk and juggled a package in one hand.

"I'd really like to return this to you, Mr. Clawson," he said, "but I can't do it until after the trial. It's your hundred thousand dollars that you dropped into a bread-box tonight. I had a little hunch from the start—but I couldn't be sure. I was better satisfied after I'd looked up your wife's record and found that—well, that most of her choir-singing had been done in a burlesque chorus. And so, while you were gone tonight, and while the dicks from headquarters were busily engaged in capturing her confederate, I just had her and the servants brought down here for questioning—the servants to tell what we already knew, and your wife to tell the

fact that she'd tried every legitimate way in the world to get money out of you, and failing, had worked the only racket that would make you loosen up."

Harris looked at the gaping, gasping individual before him. Then he continued.

"I've got a little good news for you. All those little escapades were entered into before your wife married you. That's why she confessed them so easily. There'll be publicity—much of it. But it's of a little different sort from what you've been expecting. In this case you'll simply appear as the prosecuting witness, to testify that your wife, with a confederate named Haynes, whom she knew in the good old days, hatched up a nice little proposition to get a hundred thousand dollars out of you by the poison-pen racket, worked, not against you, but against that wife herself. The minute Haynes had his hands safely glued on the money, your choir-singing mate and he were to make the grand get-away to parts unknown. And of course, you were to stay behind. Now, to be that prosecuting witness, you, of course, will have to sign the information charging the crime, as prepared by the district attorney. And naturally, I don't want you to take my word. Your wife's out in the anteroom. She's had her turn on the griddle, and she'll talk. She's already signed one confession made to us—and another one wont hurt. Would you like to interview the lady?"

Wordlessly, Kenneth Clawson signified his desires. A half-hour later, perspiring, dull-faced, he reentered the office of the inspector in charge.

"Where—where do I go to sign the warrant?" he asked.

"To the district attorney's office, at ten o'clock in the morning," answered Harris. "Meanwhile, your time's your own. Shall I call a taxicab for you, or would you prefer the cheaper system of a street-car?"

A long moment passed. Then Kenneth Clawson reached into a pocket and dragged forth his wallet. He tore the old strap from it and threw it on the floor. He raked the bills from the various little partitions and stuffed them loosely into a trousers pocket. Then he straightened his shoulders, and with the air of a man facing the whole wide world, willing to go the limit, even if it should cost as much as three dollars, he waved a hand toward the telephone.

"Call me a taxi!" he ordered.





## The Men of Grimaldi

IT all happened some twenty-five thousand years ago. But for all that, you'll find it well worth reading about.

### Prosper Buranelli

ONE early morning twenty-five thousand years ago a lame man and a woman took their way along the foot of a mountain. On one hand rose the precipitous walls of the peak; on the other, a vista of hills undulated dark and full of mood against the misty sunrise. But it was not any mood of the hills that roused a sudden cry from the man and set him staring eagerly.

A mammoth ambled along a distant hill crest. The lame man trembled with ardor. It required no second glance to convince him that it was the largest mammoth he had ever seen, a giant of its gigantic breed, and he had an especial feeling for mammoths. He gripped his bow with the gesture of a practiced slayer of beasts, as though he would go straightway and hunt down the shaggy monster. But the woman mocked him.

"Come. We must hurry," she exclaimed bitterly. "If our people find us they will kill us."

The lame hunter struck his hand against his crooked leg in impotent rage, and limped despondently after the woman. And on they went—outlaws who had violated the morality of their age.

The time was, and not long past, when this lame man had been held in honor and esteem. He was handsome, with the very wide face, high-bridged nose and finely

modeled chin of his race. His large and nobly proportioned head, the proud bearing of his tall, broad figure, and the cut of his reindeer-skin robes bespoke a man of the aristocracy. His blood rank was distinguished. He was of the line of a legendary hero who stood heroic in the epics of his people: the great warrior-artist, "Ak, the Slayer of the Dwarfs." From this ancestor the lame hunter had derived his name, which for a long time he had not dishonored. He had been the bravest of the young hunters, the stanchest of the warriors, and he had excelled in that strange, marvelous thing that signalized his race: their art.

Then one day on a hunt he had emerged from a wild encounter with a mammoth, his right leg badly broken and permanently warped. Thereafter he had lost his pre-eminence in war and hunting. A sobriquet was given him which ever reminded him of his misfortune; Lame Ak, they called him. For a long while he was filled with brooding wretchedness, which, though, increased the power and subtlety of his art, and many were certain that he would end by equaling the sublime masterpieces of his ancestor, "Ak, the Slayer of the Dwarfs."

Lame Ak's tribe lived in a wide, shallow cave lying deep in a valley, through which flowed a convenient mountain stream. To

this comfortable home were brought one day, and given over to the guardianship of the matrons of the cave, a dozen or so of tranquil and unresentful women who had been stolen from a neighboring tribe. Among them was a tall, handsome girl, answering the name of Udra, whose deftness with bone needle and animal-skin thread (an important wifely qualification) was evidenced by her neatly fashioned toga of reindeer skin. She had struggled hard when captured—from which they called her Wild Udra. But she had been completely tamed by the sight of the excellently situated cave which was to be her home—for good home caves were rare.

Hitherto Lame Ak had not thought of wives, but now he fell captive to Wild Udra's charm of face and figure. And he soon told her that he would demand her as his initial spouse. She was not displeased, for, although her lover had a crooked leg, he was young and of pleasing mien and bearing, a man of ancestry and prestige, and she would be a first wife—the favorite position, since she would be the mistress of all the wives that might follow.

But another hunter spoke up, and announced his determination to add the girl to his already numerous and well-selected bevy of mates. In such a case there was but one way of determining a woman's marital future; the way of the flint knife. The augury of battle was invoked, and Lame Ak and his rival fought like two wild bulls who gore each other furiously while the contested cow grazes near-by, placid and neutral. Wild Udra, however, violated all traditions by proving herself a spectator neither placid nor neutral.

The combat had proceeded very satisfactorily, as several onlooking tribesmen told each other, when the outrageous thing occurred. The artist, several times put to disadvantage by his lameness, finally sank on one knee, as he grappled with his adversary. The latter instantly seized his opportunity, and, with a violent struggle, wrenched his stabbing arm free. Wild Udra lost her wit as she saw her lover about to die. She leaped forward, seized the uplifted knife arm, and pinioned Lame Ak's adversary from behind. In a flash Lame Ak had availed himself of her aid, and had plunged his flint blade into his enemy's body.

The scandalized bystanders, interfering too late to halt the deed, seized the offenders and accused them before the tribe,

which quickly assembled. Shooting to death by arrows was the just sentence, and Lame Ak and Wild Udra were fettered to await their doom. Meanwhile, though, several of the sagest patriarchs of the tribe had urged that consideration be taken of Lame Ak's eminent lineage and of his artistic powers. The many widows of the slain man cried loudly for the archer executioners to do their work, but at length the majority of the tribesmen were swayed by potent argument, and the death sentence was commuted to one of exile. The lame artist was derisively wedded to the girl, and was commanded to depart from his ancestral cave at daybreak and ever thereafter to wander with his bride as an outcast among men.

At dawn Lame Ak and Wild Udra went forth on their bitter honeymoon, to a wedding tune of jeers. They directed their steps toward the artist's mountain studio, a great limestone cavern some miles distant. The artist wanted to look upon his pictures once more, before going into the lightless future.

LAME AK squatted on his heels before the entrance of his studio cave. He was lighting a lamp. An excited call came from Wild Udra, who had wandered away and was hidden by the prevailing scrub vegetation. He hurried to her. She was pointing out to the hills.

"They are gone now," she cried. "I saw them clearly against the sky. Children—strange, strange children. They came over the hill yonder, and now are down among the trees."

"You are dreaming," replied the artist. He could perceive nothing unusual in any direction, save the minute silhouette of the mammoth dallying on the same hill where they had seen him before.

"I saw them," she insisted. "They were small, like children."

But the artist's attention was taken by the magnificent brute in the distance (mammoths always fascinated him) and for a while he stared dreaming over the moody gray hillsides that would have afforded a thrilling field whereon to bait the monster. The sun was just above the wavy horizon-line, very clear and dazzling, dissolving the mist, and conjuring the heroic poetry that lives in the soul of a hunter race. And there afar was the ancient mammoth! Lame Ak was in a torment of desire. If only he could hasten back and call out the



hunters. He knew, though, that his fellows would kill him on sight. He stirred himself in disillusionment.

"Come, let us go inside," he said. Wild Udra followed him dubiously, wondering whether her fancies had really tricked her with the strange distant shapes of children.

Lame Ak took up his lamp and led the way through a screen of vegetation to the lofty wall of a cliff. A black hole in the limestone yawned before them. Into this they plunged.

Presently the devious tunnel widened into an immense cavern, where the fall of their feet upon the limestone floor evoked a maze of hollow echoes, and where the wavering lamplight lost itself in the vast blackness. Lame Ak led the way straight across the mountain hall, over large spaces of empty floor, past clumps of towering stalactite columns. They came to a small vestibule which adjoined the main room of the grotto. In the smoky lamplight there loomed the form of a mammoth painted on the white limestone wall. They lit two more lamps, several of which lay on the floor together with the artist's bone and flint tools.

It was as though there were a small and excessively holy sanctuary gleaming beside the unlighted nave of the mountain cathedral, with the mammoth showing boldly on the white wall, an eerie painted idol to whose shrine the nuptial pair had come in adoration.

To the shrine they had repaired often during these short, bright, wooing days prior to Wild Udra's violation of the laws of flint-knife warfare. Lame Ak had discovered the cave, long before, and had executed pictures on various spaces of its ample walls. Recently he had come upon the remote vestibule. It had taken his fancy greatly, seeming an ideal place for a masterpiece. He had chosen for his subject the beast that lured his thoughts with a morbid fascination, the beast to whom he owed his crooked leg, the beast he hated yet bowed before.

The mammoth in the sanctuary was about half life-size, drawn with spirit and grace. It was pictured in the act of charging, its trunk outstretched. It was colored in red, brown and black, with the outlines graved in the limestone by dint of hammer and flint chisel.

The artist took up a hollow bone tube half full of red ochre earth. Using a reindeer's shoulder blade as a palette he mixed

a quantity of the pigment with animal grease. Then he added touches of this durable color to the picture: the tips of his fingers served to apply the paint. He continued this for a while, until Wild Udra brought him back to reality.

They were going into wild, hopeless exile, it is true, but, at the same time, they were going on their honeymoon. And then, as Lame Ak remarked to himself, the girl was a figure to command the attention of any man. The bridegroom turned his thoughts from art to love. He caressed the tawny girl, stroking her long black hair and speaking phrases, which, if harsh and guttural in sound, were very tender in meaning. He trod the path of dreams and left behind the grievous thought of their misfortune.

"Children, strange children, I saw them clearly," Wild Udra muttered. Romance had not parted her entirely from the world outside the lovers' cave.

"You women," said Lame Ak, who had grown very sentimental, "you women think of nothing but children." Such, indeed, was the state of affairs in the Stone Age.

A RAPID foot-fall echoed through the cavern, soft, continuous, very strange. It receded and came closer. Heavy panting could be heard in the darkness. A pause. A terrible cry. And the footsteps drummed a more rapid tattoo than before. What was it? The terrified lovers could not answer.

It was not a man. The patter of feet was too soft for the heavy, sandalled tread of the cave people. A cave lion? A lion could not have uttered that fearful shriek—nor a cave bear. A cave leopard? The tribesmen had driven all the large carnivores from that region. A fear deeply touched with the agony of superstition came over the pair. A sabre-toothed tiger?

For generations not one of those dreadful slayers had been seen, but old men told legends they had heard of the sabre-toothed tigers that had occasionally been encountered in former times. A single tiger slew nations. A sweep of its monstrous fangs would lay open a mammoth. Was it possible that one of those creatures of terror had survived in some obscure recess of the cavern's immensity, and now had come out into the main hall?

Wild Udra trembled no less than her mate, but it might be, she thought, that the great killer was timid of light and would

not venture into the brightness. Lame Ak had heard too much about sabre-toothed tigers to imagine they were afraid of anything—still the light was their only hope.

Finally the patter of feet, after dimming in the distance, was silent. They waited, breathless. Minutes passed and there was no return of the footfalls. Had the brute gone back to its lair? Or was it waiting outside in the open, where the lamplight would afford no protection? Or was it crouched there in the darkness ready to spring upon them as they emerged from their refuge? They had to dare. They could not wait forever. Each took up a lamp, and they hurried in the direction of the cave entrance.

They had not gone many yards when the footfalls approached again from afar. The tiger! They broke into a run. The footfalls came nearer and nearer. With an effort Lame Ak collected himself. He halted his flight, put down his lamp, and made ready with an arrow. At his call Wild Udra came to his side. They stood engulfed in the great blackness, their lamps casting a small circumference of pale light about them. The footsteps seemed to circle them, but for all their wide-eyed staring, they could perceive nothing. Then nearer, nearer. A figure darted from behind a clump of towering columns. Lame Ak precipitously loosed an arrow, which went wild. Instantly he was sent sprawling, as a small, rapidly moving body crashed into him. Wild Udra struck madly with her heavy stone lamp. A small man dropped motionless at her feet.

Lame Ak scrambled to his feet, brandishing his knife, but the prostrate figure did not move. The artist took up his lamp, and man and woman gazed at the strange being, the like of which they had never seen before. They were profoundly astonished, and the artist dragged the inert body back to the sanctuary, where Wild Udra lighted many lamps.

It was a man under five feet in height, of inky-black color, flat of nose and clad in the rudest wrappings of animal skins—a creature utterly unlike the tall, broad-faced hunters. A hideous creature, thought Wild Udra; she was disgusted with the adventure. But in the artist's soul a tremendous dawn was breaking.

Generations before, his people had completed the extermination of the dwarf Neanderthal race that had preceded them in Europe. The artist's ancestor, "Ak, the

Slayer of the Dwarfs," had achieved the topmost glory in those legended wars. The curiosity was that the tall cave people, in their epic stories of the great struggle, cherished an insistent idea that the ancient pigmies one day would reappear. There was a famous augury on the subject: that the man who should first catch sight of a neanderthal, in the second coming of that race, was destined to become the greatest hero of his age.

It appeared to Lame Ak that the creature before them was nothing less than the neanderthal mentioned in the prophecy. He, Lame Ak, therefore was the man marked by the supernatural revelation. With this intoxicating thought, new horizons opened in the soul of the artist. Instead of perishing wretchedly, an outcast, he saw himself the demigod of his times, lording over all his fellows, and living gloriously in the stories told when storms should keep the people in their caves. He felt upon him the magic of divine announcement. His painted face was impassive, as he stood looking down at the motionless dwarf, but before his eyes swam visions.

Wild Udra, apprised of her spouse's joyous thought, concurred readily. She stressed the phase that the strange encounter would terminate their exile. The tribe, in the light of the awesome prophecy, would be compelled to overlook the irregularity that marked Lame Ak's encounter with her other suitor. Pleasant, homely thoughts filled her mind. Instead of miserable outlawry, she saw before her a happy domestic life beside the hearth fire of her husband's ancestral cave.

During the jubilant colloquy between the lame artist and his wife, the strange pigmy opened his eyes. He opened them to an astonishing width. You might have thought that the creature's eyeballs were preparing to roll out of their sockets and down their owner's cheeks.

#### THE GODS OF THE ELEPHANT

WHERE the Alps descend into the Mediterranean, along that festive shore, the Riviera, there are the nine Grottoes of Grimaldi set in the steep wall of a limestone promontory. Who shall write the history of those hospitable caves? For hundreds of centuries during the prehistoric past, they sheltered beast and man. Scarcely had the sea receded and bared



their entrances, than inhabitants came: first hyenas, plentiful in Europe a hundred thousand years ago; soon after came the earliest man; other animals followed; then other races of men, these last dating back to the period of our story. The various denizens left their debris, and through a thousand centuries this accumulated, until today the scientist must needs dig down through eighty feet of animal bones, human skeletons, hearth ashes, human implements, and dust accumulations, before the original limestone floor is met.

Sixteen human skeletons have been taken from the Grottos of Grimaldi, all belonging to the upper period of the Stone Age. The much older Neanderthal race of the lower paleolithic period is represented by stone implements left in the deepest stratum of the debris.

Fourteen of the sixteen skeletons found are those of the tall, broad-faced Cro-Magnon people, that great race of artists who left finely executed pictures on cave walls all over Europe, which continent they dominated for fifteen millenniums. The other two skeletons are of an extremely different type. They are small, about five feet in height; the Cro-Magnons averaged a stature of six feet. While the Cro-Magnons were of an Asiatic type, these two dwarf skeletons present decided negroid characteristics. They stand as the only negro racial evidence ever found in Europe.

Was Europe at one time inhabited by the black African type? Many skeletons of the tall Cro-Magnon artists have been found in caves all over Europe. No negro trace has been met with other than the two skeletons of Grimaldi. That does not indicate any permanent inhabitation.

Or was there an invasion, a foray of the Men of Grimaldi into Europe? That is a thing to take the imagination. Many peoples have swept their way into Europe, by way of Gibraltar, through the Balkan gates, from the Siberian steppe. But never, in all the raids and migrations recorded in history, has there been a negro horde marching on Europe. Never has the vast black African mass been known to burst its bounds and strike northward into the White Man's domain. But back in the dim Stone Age, we may think, a myriad of negro dwarfs swept along the upper Mediterranean shore.

The Men of Grimaldi came in their thousands, and passed into Spain over the strip of land that connected Europe with

Africa. In that day there was no straits at Gibraltar; the Mediterranean was a land-locked sea. The horde moved slowly and serenely. It was the earliest period of Cro-Magnon culture, and Europe was not so plentifully populated with the artist-hunter race as it was to be several thousand years later. The invading Africans encountered no human vestige until one day when they were nearing the southern Alps. On this day a singular adventure fell to the lot of Mogro, the greatest fetich man among the Grimaldis.

This divinely empowered person set out at the first glimmer of dawn with a score of his dwarfish followers to scout out ahead of the main body of the slowly moving Africans. Now, despite Mogro's influence with things supernatural, the party got lost. They shivered about in the crude animal-skin wrappings they had adopted upon their arrival in cold Europe, then in the throes of the last glacial period, and wandered through the hill country for several hours. It was Mogro and his party whom Wild Udra had spied and mistaken for children. Presently the unsuspecting Africans emerged from a clump of brush and found themselves in the presence of a huge, humpbacked mammoth, the same giant that the Cro-Magnon nuptial pair had seen.

THE Grimaldis had learned for ages in their native haunts to know and respect the stalwart African elephant. Know and respect, indeed, were small words in their vocabulary. They were elephant worshipers. The great beast was their totem, their sacred animal, and now they were in the majestic presence of a super-elephant. The mammoth's enormous tusks, curved like great ivory hooks, pierced their souls with ecstasies of fright, and the strange aspect lent by the giant beast's long, shaggy wool caused them copious perspiration. Their reaction was instant and complete. They turned in the direction they had come from and fled.

It is regrettable that none of the speeding Africans stopped to watch the performance of Mogro. The priest of elephant worship demonstrated his piety by the pitch of his terror. He leaped on and on quite blindly, until halted by the cliff within whose beetling wall lay the great cavern where the outcast Cro-Magnon bridal pair caressed each other at the foot of the painted mammoth. Mogro fled

along the foot of the cliff for a short distance, until he came upon the entrance to the cave. He plunged into the black tunnel.

He soon found himself in the great hall of the grotto. The utter darkness and the strange echoing of his soft tread multiplied his terror, and he ran aimlessly through the lightless spaces. Suddenly he saw before him the Cro-Magnon man and woman in the bright sanctuary, and the painted mammoth. He stood palsied for a moment, uttered the terrible cry that had startled the exiled twain, and darted in the opposite direction. He eventually fled to the other extremity of the cavern, and then circled around until he crashed into Lame Ak, and was felled by Wild Udra's granite lamp. He remained stunned while they dragged him to the sanctuary, and while Lame Ak made his reflections upon Mogro's being one of the ancient neanderthal dwarfs against whom his great ancestor had warred, and rejoiced in the prospect of being received back into his tribe.

When Mogro opened his eyes, he fancied that he was in the Grimaldi heaven. In dawning ecstasy it came to him that he was in the mystical presence of the elephant god, painted on the wall, with two towering archangels in attendance. The bewildered savage prostrated himself on his face and worshipped these terrible deities. He had suffered much in his devotion to the elephant, but now he was rewarded with the radiant apparition of the elephant of elephants, and these great humans, co-divinities of the elephant.

All this time Lame Ak was rudely binding the hands of the soul-inflamed Mogro. When he had finished Wild Udra took up a lamp, extinguished the others, and the party made for the entrance of the cave, Lame Ak leading the pinioned Grimaldi, who regarded the proceedings as some inscrutable rite of heaven, an initiation into the court circles of the celestial elephant.

Arrived at the cave entrance, Lame Ak stepped out into the open, and sharply drew back, but not before a grazing arrow had cut the flesh of his shoulder.

A ROUSING affair had begun amid the hills outside the cave. Cro-Magnon hunters had spied the mammoth, had carried the tidings to the home cave, and the tribesmen hurried forth to bag the tusker. The plan was to dig a pit at a favorable place not far from the cave entrance and

then contrive to get the brute into it. The digging was almost complete (wooden staves for shovels make quick progress when there are many of them in eager hands), when Lame Ak appeared at the cave entrance. A Cro-Magnon who had his bow ready sent an instant and well-aimed arrow toward the outlaw.

The artist, safe in the passageway, shouted to his fellows. He had caught a Neanderthal. The head of the tribe came forward and held parley. It was remarkable news. Lame Ak emerged leading the captive Mogro. Wild Udra followed. The public excitement was all that Lame Ak could have desired. Mogro would have been flattered by the sensation he provoked, were he not engaged in making profound obeisances to those other tall, divine men, sacred to the elephant of elephants.

Runners brought in all the elders of the tribe. At first they were very skeptical. The thing was too astounding for their judgment, they decided finally. They would have to take the artist and the strange dwarf to the great Cro-Magnon cave that faced the sea some miles to the south, where the wisest soothsayers of their race resided. These alone could pass upon such thorny questions as the interpretations of the old prophecy, and whether the irregularities in the fight for Wild Udra should be erased from memory. The general opinion was, however, that the bridal pair would be executed.

The discussion of these profundities was disturbed by a terrible yell from Mogro, who caught sight of the mammoth coming over the top of a not distant crest. The brisk wind sweeping over the hills brought the shouts of the hunters following the beast.

The pitfall had been completed, covered over with a stout but false flooring. The hunters were driving the mammoth with shouts and firebrands toward the pit. The great beast, frightened by the unusual sights and sounds, ambled before the half-circle of yelling cave men, and promised to pass near the trap.

A young Cro-Magnon came around in front of the mammoth and took careful aim with an arrow. The barb set itself in the huge trunk. The mammoth trumpeted with rage and charged the archer, who ran swiftly toward the pitfall. The enraged mammoth's extended trunk was within a few feet of him as he bounded across the



false covering. The charging monster crashed into the pit, and, after fearful struggles, found itself lying on its side, wedged. The hunters crowded around, and set about the gory and arduous labor of killing their screaming prey with spear and arrow.

The scene evoked the profoundest melancholy in Lame Ak. He saw himself in the place of the youth who had drawn the mammoth's charge, saw himself winging the arrow that had roused the brute's fury, and darting for the covered pit, but being caught by the sinking floor and precipitated into the hole with the struggling beast. It was thus that the artist had gained his lameness.

The artist's emotion was small beside that of Mogro. To the fetich man the death of the mammoth was a terrible, sacred rite. It was a mystical sacrifice of the divine animal. He knelt in a paroxysm of exaltation before the bloody spectacle, which, he felt, his lifelong piety had gained him the ineffable privilege of witnessing.

Idle emotion, though, was out of place in a time of action. A momentous question was awaiting decision. The tribesmen were given an opportunity to inspect the curiosity of the hour, Mogro. Women and half-grown youths set about dismembering the carcass of the mammoth. And a column was formed for the march of the warriors and their strange captive to the great cave. The party swung along briskly for several hours, and had caught sound of the distant murmur of the sea, when they ascended a rocky eminence which looked down upon an appalling spectacle.

Thousands of voices dinned wildly, while over all pierced the screams of dying men. The narrow valley swarmed with the sable dwarfs of Grimaldi, hosts of them, seething like a whirlpool around a group of striking, silent men. These silent men were in a desperate pass. They fought savagely with stone-headed hatchet, wooden spear and flint knife. The earth was littered with slaughtered Grimaldis, but the yelling pigmies flung themselves upon their surrounded enemies in senseless confusion, and with the heartbreaking stamina of overwhelming numbers. Slowly the men at bay were being struck down. One went to earth, stabbed through the body by a Grimaldi spear. Another pitched headlong, with blood gushing from a knife wound. It was evidently a matter of but little time when the last one would go the way of his

slain comrades, striking silently until the death cry came into his throat.

The great cave of the Cro-Magnons, for which Lame Ak and his party had started, had reposed very quietly that day until the middle of the afternoon, when its occupants received the first word of the coming of the Grimaldi horde. These, after Mogro and his band had left them, had marched along with no disturbance until they had clashed with a Cro-Magnon hunting party. The tall archers, after sending one of their number back to camp for the main body of warriors, had loosed arrow after arrow into the Grimaldi thousands; but the nimble black pigmies had swarmed about them and were at the point of bearing them down, when the main body of their tribesmen arrived and charged into the fray. The onset of the large, heavy-bodied Cro-Magnons had demoralized the Grimaldis for a moment, then the horde had reacted confusedly but vigorously, and soon the several hundred Cro-Magnon warriors found themselves surrounded, with the enemy at close quarters, so that arrow fire was impracticable.

**L**AME AK and his companions, when they came upon the scene, gave little time to meditation. They did not stop to reason that the situation in the valley was hopeless, and that if the small party charged down to the rescue, they would merely be swallowed in the mass of the Grimaldis and be worn down as their fellows were. The party on the hill made no reflection, but, fancying themselves confronted by their legendary Neanderthal enemies, went blood mad, and charged to what seemed certain destruction. They clambered down the hillside. A shout went up from the dwarfs. Lame Ak tacitly took the command, and led his men as they rushed onto the level floor of the valley and toward a thousand or so Grimaldis. Here a remarkable thing occurred.

Mogro, who had passed from notice in the excitement, darted forward. With his arms still pinioned, the fetichman ran before the charging hunters, and cried in a fearful voice: "The Gods of the Elephant! Make way for the Gods of the Elephant!" The spectacle of his people coming forth in hostility against the divine band that shared honors with the dread mammoth, with the elephant of heaven, had roused the fetichman's soul to a frenzy of pious indignation. They would be ut-

terly destroyed for their impiety. And now he cried frantic warnings to them, and darted among the amazed Grimaldis, hurling anathemas at their heads. "Make way for the Gods of the Elephant, who have made a sacrifice of the Elephant of Elephants," he screamed. The Grimaldis who heard these things fell into a panic. Mogro was the most potent of their magicians. He was gifted with terrible powers. In an instant the blacks were scattering before the onset of Lame Ak's party, who struck down every man they could reach.

"The Gods of the Elephant," the cry went up on all sides. Soon it had spread among the main body of the Grimaldis. Lame Ak and his men responded to the situation with a murderous rush that brought them beside their weary, surrounded fellows, who had taken new heart as they beheld the Grimaldis falter in the wave of superstitious fear. The combined Cro-Magnon bands drove savagely at their terrorized enemies, who fled in a panic, with the cry chorusing wildly among them—"The Gods of the Elephant!" They fell in hundreds beneath the hatchets, spears and maces of the victors, who followed them far across the hills.

**L**AME AK, hero of the memorable day, strode about surveying the battlefield, as victorious generals have done since the day when wars began. Beside him were a few Cro-Magnon leaders, full of congratulations. Beside him, too, was Wild Udra, who had fought beside the warriors. Her artist was indeed the hero foretold in the

old prophecy, she exclaimed. The Cro-Magnon leaders gravely concurred. Lame Ak had led the victory. He had overthrown the Neanderthals in their foretold second coming. Upon him should descend the august name of "Ak, the Slayer of the Dwarfs." All glory be his! The sudden discomfiture of the Grimaldis mystified them all, and it was only reasonable to believe that the unseen powers had intervened in Lame Ak's behalf. The gods were with him. More honor to him than ever!

The artist, however, waxed gloomy of soul as he listened to these panegyrics. The recent strange events perplexed him acutely. The more he thought about it all, the less he understood. He stalked moodily across the field.

A melancholy form dragged itself toward him. It was Mogro. The fetich man had been struck down in the melee, and now, somewhat revived, he crawled forward, and bowed to the earth before Lame Ak, the greatest of the Gods of the Elephant. Mogro felt that he had proved himself a good and faithful servant. Though bloody and battered a great peace was in his soul—and a greater one speedily came. A Cro-Magnon laughed in uncomprehending scorn, and lanced his spear through the prostrate worshiper's body.

Lame Ak felt a vague sorrow at Mogro's end. He did not know why, but it depressed him. It served to give a more solemn tone to the mysteries of his triumphant day, and these mysteries deepened permanently the sombre cast of his spirit. Perhaps that is why he became the greatest artist of the Old Stone Age.

## "VOODOO"

**W**ILLIAM ALMON WOLFF has written for the Blue Book a thrilling novelette dealing with some Americans' adventures in Haiti, which will appear in our next issue under the title "Voodoo." Along with it will be stories by Frederick Bechdolt, Robert J. Casey, William Harper Dean, George Allan England, Marshall Scull and other writers of living, vital fiction.



# Including Good Will



You'll like the people in this story. They're real folks.

Charles Wesley Sanders

**J**IMMY CARLTON was perfectly sure that nobody could put anything over on him, as he phrased it. Certainly the stolid, rather fat man who stood opposite him could not do it. Jimmy was going to prove what the fat man had told him, and he was going to do it in his own way.

"How much business did you do last month, Dr. Simmons?" he asked briskly.

"Four hundred dollars," Simmons answered; "and that is about what I average."

"And your price?"

"One thousand dollars for everything, including good will."

"Give me till day after tomorrow to decide?"

"Yes sir. Till day after tomorrow at noon."

"I'll be here," Jimmy said.

Simmons went back to the dentist's chair in the other room. Jimmy passed into the hall. As he looked back, he fixed his eyes on a girl who sat near the door. He had hoped she would look up, but she did not. Her sleek dark head was bent over her work. Her long lashes veiled her dark brown eyes. Jimmy knew they were dark brown eyes, because she had given him one fleeting glance when he had entered the office half an hour ago.

"Maybe you'll look at me when I'm your boss, young lady," he said a little resentfully, for he was only twenty-four.

In the street he stood for a while in the bright glare of the summer sun and pondered with bent head. As a rule he was a somewhat impulsive young man, but he knew that he must give deep thought to what he was about to do. If he protected himself, he would presently be a successful dentist. If he did not, he would have tied up his slender capital and would be sadly waiting for patients who did not come.

"If he already has patients, I'd get more," he told himself. "I'm a better dentist than he is. Well, I'll check him up."

He had not seen Simmons operate, and he had nothing upon which to base his assertion that he was a better dentist than Simmons except his belief that he was about as good a dentist as there was anywhere. He had been graduated two years before this, and he had had a year in an army camp.

He knew the peril that lay in merely opening an office, hanging out a sign and seeking to establish himself against competition.

As a first step he had inserted an advertisement in a newspaper, stating he would pay cash for such a business as he

described. He received three replies. The first two he cast aside. They promised too much. The third he studied. This business, its owner said, was not actively for sale. It was a prosperous business. The owner had made money out of it. He could continue to make money out of it. However, he would sell if an agreement could be reached.

GOING to the address given, Jimmy had found some things that were to his liking and some that were not. The location was first rate. There were factories and stores all about, and homes of working people spread away in every direction. There was only one other dental office in the immediate neighborhood. Jimmy would have preferred a neighborhood a little more genteel, but he didn't insist upon that. A workingman's dollar would have as great purchasing power as an aristocrat's dollar. The office equipment did not awaken any great enthusiasm in Jimmy's breast, but that could be improved upon.

The good will of the business was the thing. If Simmons could do business in an indifferently equipped office, certainly Jimmy could do more business in a well-equipped office. A better dentist, better equipment. It was very simple. That was the feeling that was uppermost through the rest of that day, and it was with him next morning as he made his early way toward Simmons' office.

When he came to the vicinity of the office, he did not enter it. Instead he took up his station across the street. Standing in a convenient doorway, he could see the window of Simmons' operating-room.

He lounged in the doorway till eight o'clock, and then he came to attention. He wanted to see what time Simmons reached the office. He considered that important. If Simmons came late and still had patients, it was a point in favor of Jimmy's purchasing, for it would prove that Jimmy could do more business by coming early and remaining late. He knew that there were a lot of things like that to be considered when a young man is branching out for himself.

At a few minutes past eight he saw the girl enter the building.

"You're on the job anyway, aren't you, my dear?" he said.

He didn't mean the "my dear" offensively. In fact, he had decided the night before that if he bought the business there should be no nonsense between him and the girl. He should say not! She would have to contribute her share or he would get somebody to take her place. True, he had wondered once or twice why she hadn't looked at him when he left the office, but of course that was a matter of no moment.

He dismissed her from his mind and focused his attention on the entrance to the building. At half past eight he began to wonder and at nine o'clock he was puzzled. A dreary hour passed. He began to believe that Simmons must be ill. If he were ill, Jimmy had an idea that he ought to go over and see if there was anything he could do. In Simmons' absence several patients might come and go. That would be Jimmy's own ultimate loss if he bought the business.

HE was on the point of following this impulse when Simmons appeared. Jimmy had thought that when he did come he would come in haste. But Simmons seemed to have as much time as there was. In front of the building he stopped to chat for five minutes with a man he met. Then he went leisurely into the building.

Jimmy transferred his anxious gaze to the windows of Simmons' office. Surely there would be at least one patient waiting, and Simmons would appear before the window of the operating-room. But Simmons didn't. Instead he sat down in front of one of the windows of the reception-room and began to read a newspaper.

"Business isn't what I'd call rushing," said Jimmy to himself glumly.

He was bitterly disappointed. He found, in his reaction, that he had been rather set on buying Simmons out. He could make pleasant offices up there with a little expenditure. That girl looked as if she would be alert and efficient. But of course she was not an important factor.

Two dull hours followed. Simmons had only one patient, a man who apparently had a tooth extracted. He was in the chair for only a moment.

At twelve o'clock Simmons came down stairs and went into a little restaurant. He remained for ten minutes. When he came out and entered the building again, he



was moving briskly. Jimmy breathed a little sigh of relief.

"Probably it was a dull morning," he said to himself. "He acts as if he had some engagements for this afternoon."

He crossed the street and started up the stairs. On the landing he met the girl, leaving the office. She gave him a quick little nod of recognition but she did not smile.

"Gee, you're frosty," Jimmy said to himself, looking after her.

He entered the office and found Simmons busily pawing over his tools.

"Hello," said Simmons with an effect of joviality. "You're on time, I see."

"Have any business this morning?" Jimmy asked.

Simmons shot a suspicious glance at him.

"I stood everybody off till this afternoon," he said. "I had a blinding headache all night. Been having some trouble with my eyes. I suppose everybody will come at once this afternoon."

"Would you have any objection to my hanging around and seeing how business goes this afternoon?" Jimmy asked a little anxiously.

"Not a bit in the world," Simmons said.

AT one o'clock the girl came back from her lunch.

"I don't know as you've met Miss Lane, Dr. Carlton," Simmons said.

The girl confronted Jimmy without a smile touching her lips. However she put out a slim hand and Jimmy took it. She pressed his hand quickly and firmly, as a boy might have done, and gave him a level glance. Jimmy blushed.

As the girl turned back to her desk, she was smiling indulgently, but Jimmy couldn't see that. He didn't know either that she was saying to herself that he was very young.

Fifteen more minutes passed. Simmons pattered about his instrument-tray. Jimmy watched the door. Miss Lane sat idly at her desk. Jimmy was beginning definitely to worry now. He guessed he would have to look elsewhere for a location. He was beginning to doubt that Simmons had any business at all.

And then the door was opened and a man entered, and Simmons' telephone-bell rang. Simmons answered and held a regretful conversation with some one at the

other end. He put up the receiver and came out to Jimmy. The man advanced to him, his hand pressed to his jaw.

"Just got a phone message that my sister is ill," Simmons said. "Very ill. . . . I dunno. . . . What can I do for you, my man?"

This last to the man who nursed his jaw. The man had advanced to Simmons' elbow and was supplicating him with pained eyes.

"I got a bad toothache, Doc," the man said. "Can't you take me on right away?"

Simmons spread out his hands in a gesture which indicated dismay at this conjunction of events.

"I ought to go to see my sister, Carlton," he said. "But here's a patient and oh, my Lordy, here's another!"

THE door had been opened again and a second man stood inquiringly on the threshold.

"Guess I better go some place else, hadn't I?" he asked in a voice which was a little brother of a foghorn. "I aint got no time to waste. Got a bad tooth. Thought you might dope it up a little today and lemme come back some other day."

He was a big man with a red face which broadened away from a hawklike nose. He made a commanding figure there in the doorway, and he, said Jimmy to himself, was exactly the kind of man whom he couldn't permit to go some place else.

So Jimmy took charge of the situation in a way that proved that there was some foundation for the confidence he had in himself. Even while he shed his coat, he began to straighten out the tangle.

"I'm getting interested in this business, Dr. Simmons," he said. "If you are willing, I'll take your place this afternoon while you go to see your sister. I think we can close up the deal tomorrow."

"Well, I don't know," Simmons said dubiously.

"You needn't worry about the quality of the work I'll do," Jimmy said. "Anyhow, if I'm going to own the business, you wont stand to lose anything."

"That's right," Simmons said. "But—well, you see, I ought to have a little something to bind the bargain. You might change your mind."

Jimmy knew that he had come to the crisis. He looked at Miss Lane and found

her eyes on him. He thought there was expectancy in her look. He took a deep breath—and plunged.

"Will fifty dollars do?" he asked.

"It'll do," Simmons said.

"Miss Lane, make out a receipt for fifty dollars," Jimmy requested.

While Miss Lane was making out the receipt for Simmons to sign, Jimmy turned to the patients with a winning smile.

"Will you just have a seat for a moment?" he said to the big man. And to the other: "If you will just step this way, please."

Simmons had signed the receipt. With a hurried word to Jimmy he got out of the office with surprising agility for one who had seemed so slow.

"I'll have to pull that tooth," Jimmy told the man who seated himself in the chair. "It's gone."

The man agreed and Jimmy yanked out the tooth. The man got up and paid for the service.

"And you," said Jimmy to the big man.

NO terror of the dentist's chair seemed to touch this man. He chuckled as he took his seat. Another chuckle died in his throat as he leaned back and opened his mouth. The sight of that cavern filled Jimmy's professional soul with joy. About every operation known to dentistry was required here: Extractions, fillings, bridge work. Jimmy told the man so.

The big fellow found the diagnosis only the occasion for further mirth. He sat up chuckling. He leaned forward and gurgled. He threw up his head and guffawed.

"Doc," he said, "'s fur as I'm concerned you c'n go the extreme limit, an' I don't give a tinker's dam how much it costs. Ho, ho, ho!"

A young dentist taking his first uncertain steps on the highway of success could have asked for no more than that. The man needed a great deal of work done. He was willing to have it done. He didn't care about the cost. And he could laugh at the prospect of pain and tediousness. Jimmie had to laugh with him.

"I'll have to hurt you," Jimmy said. "Some of your teeth are in such shape that I don't care to use cocaine. I'll be as gentle as I can, though."

"Oh, I can stand the gaff," the big man assured him. "I'm workin' nights in a foundry down here. Been a foundryman all my life. I guess you wont hurt me

no more than I been hurt by bein' burned. I guess hot metal will sting as much as them drills of yours."

Jimmy, with a calculating eye to effect, did his first work where it would show. Two teeth in the upper jaw, in front, required filling. When Jimmy finished, a neat band of gold ran up and down the edges and the teeth were whiter than they had been probably since the man's childhood.

"How do you like that?" he asked, holding a glass before the patient's face.

The big fellow curled back his lips and gazed at his teeth in unrestrained admiration.

"By cracky, kid," he said, "some teeth now, aint they? Can you fix up my whole two jaws like that?"

"You bet," said Jimmy. "I'll measure you for a bridge now."

He turned away and stopped. He had heard the outer door open. Miss Lane came to the office door.

"Two more patients, Dr. Carlton," she announced.

"Are you in a hurry to have your work finished?" Jimmy asked the man. "Will this answer for today?"

"Sure," he said. "I'll come tomorrow."

Jimmy followed him into the other room. Two men were sitting there. The big man looked at them and then he went off into a paroxysm of laughter. They smiled sheepishly.

"What's the joke?" Jimmy asked.

"Oh, nothin'," the man answered. "Not a thing! When I looked at these guys, I just happened to think of somethin'."

Miss Lane stepped forward briskly with a pad of paper and a pencil in her hands.

"Your name, please," she said in a way that made Jimmy look at her.

"Me? Oh, Dan Madden, 104 Harper Street."

She jotted down the name and the address and then she said to Jimmy:

"Have you some business cards?"

Jimmy got a bunch of cards from his coat pocket.

"They haven't this address on them of course," he said.

"I'll fill it in," she said capably. "Just a moment, Mr. Madden."

She sat down at the desk and wrote the address on half a dozen of the cards. Rising, she handed them to Madden.

"You are pleased with the work Dr. Carlton has done so far, Mr. Madden?"



she asked; and as Madden nodded, she went on: "Wont you take these cards then and distribute them among your friends? Tell them what a good dentist Dr. Carlton is. A satisfied customer is his best advertisement, you know."

Jimmy expected her to reinforce her plea with a smile, but she did not. She was gravely businesslike.

Madden took the cards and put them into his pocket. He looked at the girl and at Jimmy. Then he took off his hat and scratched his head.

"You just starting in business, young fella?" he asked.

"Yes," Jimmy said.

"You two young folks is goin' to try to make a go of this shop together, huh?"

Jimmy blushed. Miss Lane spoke up quickly:

"I am employed by Dr. Simmons. I have no arrangement with Dr. Carlton."

"I hope you'll stay," said Jimmy.

"Why, sure," Madden contributed. "You're onto your job all right. Why, I know a dozen men right in our shop that need work done on their teeth. I'll show them what you can do an' they'll be here or most of them. Then if the young lady gives each one a bunch of cards he can pass 'em on to his friends. You'll get all the advertisin' you want." He scratched his head again and looked at Jimmy and then at the girl. "Tryin' to make a go of it in a strange shop, huh? Two young folks, huh? Well, I'll be cussed."

A frown came between his eyes and he swung out of the office.

"Something seemed to put a damper on his comedy," Jimmy said to Miss Lane in a low voice. "Wonder what it was."

"I'm sure I don't know," Miss Lane rejoined. "I'll fill in some more of these cards so that they will be ready for these two other patients."

JIMMY took care of the two men and then he came out into the other room. He was mightily pleased. He believed Simmons' business was a bargain and he certainly had a jewel of an office-girl. She was so efficient, so businesslike. No nonsense about her!

"Is business about what it has been this afternoon?" he asked.

Miss Lane turned in her chair with an air of astonishment and regarded him with widened eyes.

"Why, Dr. Carlton," she said, "how can I tell? Yesterday was my first day here. Dr. Simmons hired me just yesterday!"

Jimmy dropped into a chair and he and Miss Lane continued to regard each other in astonishment. It was plain to both of them that there were several little mysteries to be solved here. Miss Lane's being engaged just as Simmons was ready to sell the business, Simmons' being called away, the mirth of the big man—these things required explanation.

"I HAD a position with the Mortimer Lumber Company down by the river," Miss Lane said. "They were paying me twenty dollars a week. A few days ago I brought my mother here to see Dr. Simmons. Night before last he came to our house and offered me this position at thirty dollars. Of course I took it."

"There wasn't a girl in the office before you?" Jimmy asked.

"There was no one here the day mother and I were here," she replied. "There weren't any patients here either. Dr. Simmons was taking a nap in that chair by the window."

"There's something phony about this," Jimmy said.

"Something irregular, yes," Miss Lane agreed.

He was filled with sudden regret for her. Poor child, she had given up one job to accept this. If Simmons was a miserable fake, she'd be out of a place altogether. He voiced that, his regret softening his tone. Miss Lane only laughed.

"My goodness," she said hardily, "don't worry about me. I can get another place. There are more jobs than there are girls nowadays."

She turned her back on him and he looked at her a little resentfully. She was certainly a hard girl to get close to. She seemed to think she didn't need anybody's help.

As he started for the operating-room, another patient opened the door. He was a bustling, middle-aged man, and he paused in the doorway when he saw Miss Lane.

"Why, hello, Stella," he said. "What're you doing here?"

"Working," Miss Lane answered. "Did you want some dental work done, Mr. Johnson? This is Dr. Carlton."

"I met Dan Madden on the street and

he was tellin' me that there was a new dentist on the job and a good one," Johnson said. "Doc, I had some bridge-work done downtown and the darn thing is rough. I was going down to have the other dentist look at it. Haven't had time. Can you fix it?"

Jimmy could and did fix it. Johnson was highly gratified. Jimmy said he didn't want anything for a little job like that but Johnson insisted on paying him a dollar.

When he had gone, Miss Lane turned to Jimmy. There was a little repressed sparkle in her eyes.

"That," she said, "is the beginning of your business success."

"How do you mean?" Jimmy asked.

"You got that patient on your merits," she said.

"You think that those others—" Jimmy began.

He was interrupted by the opening of the door. Simmons appeared on the threshold with Dan Madden behind him. Simmons appeared to be on the verge of a stroke of apoplexy. His face was red and he was breathing with his lips dropped apart. Madden was no longer mirthful. His broad face expressed the strongest disapprobation of the man he was ushering into the room.

"Trot right in an' face the music, Simmons," he said sternly. "It may seem funny to you to get an invite to enter your own office, but in view of what is happenin' it seems to be up to me to make the invite most pressin'."

Simmons entered the room reluctantly with an angry, apprehensive glance over his shoulder at Madden.

"Well, Simmons," Madden said, "come clean."

**I**T seemed as if this must be the moment when Simmons would have his apoplectic seizure. His blood crowded still farther into his face and he leaned a little in his chair to get his breath through his parted lips.

At length he got his voice, and he laid a curse on Madden. Madden took it imperturbably. He even permitted a little smile to play about his lips now. The fat doctor was grotesque enough.

"That part of it'll be all right, Simmons," he said. "H'ever, if I was you, I wouldn't go no further. They is a young lady present and I don't believe this lad

lets folks use that kind of language before young ladies."

"I haven't done a thing that broke any law," Simmons declared.

"I'm no lawyer," Madden retorted. "I'm a foundryman. I weigh in the neighborhood of two hundred and thirty. There is mighty little fat on my frame." His eyes narrowed and what Simmons at least might have taken for a dangerous glitter came into them. "I think, Simmons," he went on, "that I could break you in two with my hands. I got a notion I could do just that. Anyhow, I could hurt you bad."

"That is threatening in a menacing manner," Simmons cried.

"You can call it that or anything you like just so long as you come acrost," Madden said. "Go on. Spill it!"

"I won't!" Simmons said viciously.

Madden raised himself from his chair and stretched himself. Simmons watched him with fascinated eyes.

"Would you mind steppin' into the Doc's private shop an' closin' the door, miss?" he asked. "I fear me there is about to be a bit of a roughhouse. It wont be nothin' for a nice young lady to see."

Miss Lane rose. Simmons shifted in his chair. The blood began to flow from his face. His lips became a little tremulous.

"Well, what is it you want?" he asked.

"Set down, miss," Madden said gently. "It aint war. It's peace." He returned to his own chair and looked at Jimmy. "Doc," he said, "I got a failin'. I'll confess to it here an' now. I like my little bit of fun. I'd do almost anything if they was a good hearty laugh in it. But I don't stand for no crooked work. I don't have to, never did have to. I always earnt good money and I've saved a piece of it. When Simmons first come to me, I thought it was a good joke an' I went into it. Then when you said there was a lot of work needed on my teeth, I thought the joke was better'n ever, especially since it would be turned on Simmons hisself an' him thinkin' he was puttin' it over on somebody else."

"You'll have to explain a little," Jimmy said.

"Well," Madden went on, "I didn't come here to do the talkin'. I brought Simmons. Shoot, Simmons!"

"It's plain enough, isn't it?" Simmons whined. "I went out and hired Madden



and several others to come in and have work done while I was away. I told them I would pay the bills."

"Your sister wasn't ill then?" Jimmy asked.

"No."

"And you hired Miss Lane just to make a showing?" Jimmy asked sharply.

"I suppose I did."

Jimmy rose. He stood before Simmons and shook his fist under Simmons' nose.

"That was a despicable thing to do," he said. "Miss Lane had a good position and you took her away from it by promising her more money. You knew the business, as it stood, wouldn't carry the salary you offered her. What do you mean by such conduct?"

"Dr. Simmons!"

MISS LANE'S voice was not so sharp as, under the circumstances, one would have expected it to be. Nor did she look, as Jimmy turned his eyes on her, as if she nursed any resentment toward Simmons.

Simmons turned to her hopefully. A kind word would be as welcome to him now as a bone to a stray pup.

"You didn't hire Mr. Johnson to come here, did you?" Miss Lane asked.

"Johnson? The dry-goods man? No. I couldn't have pulled that stunt with him."

"Well, then," said Miss Lane, leaning back in her chair, "everything is all right."

"You're an optimist," Jimmy said.

"I'm not, but I hope I have a little business perception," she stated. "You can see for yourself how it is. Mr. Madden came here and had some work done. He was pleased. He told Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson came and was pleased also. You can make this business pay, Dr. Carlton. You have the skill and you have the location. Every bit of work you do will be an advertisement for you. You can't fail. If I were you I'd ask Dr. Simmons just what he would take for the business."

"I put a price on it," Simmons said.

"Too high by far," said Jimmy, who was looking at Miss Lane. "You included good will. Though that's here, it isn't yours to include."

"Well, make me an offer."

"Five hundred dollars, cash," Jimmy said, and Miss Lane nodded.

"You're cheating me, but I suppose I've got to take it," Simmons said.

"Come in tomorrow ready to prove to me that everything in the place is paid for and I'll give you your money," Jimmy said.

Simmons rose and walked to the door. There he turned and gave Madden a venomous look. Then he went out.

"Well, I got to run along," Madden said. "I got to get ready to go to work. I'm glad I squared this matter for you two young folks. I certainly felt guilty when I saw how you two was tryin' to get a start together."

WHEN he was gone, Jimmy turned his eyes to Miss Lane's face. He expected to find her blushing because of what Madden had said, but she wasn't.

"You'll stay, wont you?" Jimmy asked.

"Why, of course," Miss Lane said, "but I'm not going to ask you to pay me more than I was getting in my other place. I'll start at twenty dollars and you can increase that later on if I'm worth it."

"Thirty or nothing," said Jimmy firmly. "We'll sink or swim together."

Miss Lane lifted her head and looked at him sternly. She was on the point of saying something when Madden opened the door and put in his head.

"Gimme some more of them cards, miss," he said. "I'll give one to everybody I know. They will be jealous when they see my teeth. I'll send the doc more business than he can ever hope to handle. That's a good idea you got, miss—them cards. You want to make the doc pay you well for your ideas."

He took a fistful of cards and once more went away.

"You see," said Jimmy, and added more firmly than before: "Thirty dollars or nothing."

"All right," agreed Miss Lane.

Smiling, Jimmy started to cross the room toward her. She turned back to her desk with a businesslike squaring of her shoulders. Jimmy stopped, hesitated and then turned and went into the operating-room. He guessed that from then on he'd show Miss Lane that he could be as frigid as she was.

He couldn't see the queer little smile on her lips—a wise, indulgent smile—or the twin twinkles in her eyes.

# Strength of the Pines



*(What Has Already Happened:)*

**W**HEN Bruce Folger appeared at Trail's End in the Cascade Mountains in Oregon, in answer to a strange summons, he found Elmira Ross, an old woman, and Linda Ross, a lovely young girl, carrying on as best they could the family feud. The Ross and Folger families had been all but wiped out by the Turner clan; and unless a secret agreement could be found wherein Ross had deeded all his property to Bruce's father, the property, having been held by the Turners for nearly twenty years, would legally pass into their hands in a few weeks. The only living witness to this agreement was an old trapper named Hudson who lived on the other side of the mountain.

Twenty years before, Bruce's father had been shot from ambush, and his mother had taken the infant and little Linda Ross (whose father also had been killed by the Turners) and had fled with them to an Eastern city. There, without leaving any clue to their identity, she had placed them in an orphanage, hoping thereby to prevent their ever returning to Oregon to risk their lives.

Simon Turner fearing that the agree-

ment might some day turn up, had kidnaped Linda from the orphanage years before and had tried to force her to marry him. He had failed in this but had prevented her leaving the valley and had intercepted all letters which she had sent to Bruce.

After listening to old Elmira's story, Bruce took his father's rifle and went out to find Hudson. Anticipating just such a move on the part of Bruce, Dave Turner reached the trapper first, and for a hundred dollars had secured his promise to swear that the forged deed held by the Turners was genuine and that no secret agreement existed.

Bruce arrived at a clearing in the woods just in time to see Hudson and Turner attacked by a bear. Turner dropped his gun and ran up a tree to safety, leaving the trapper, who was unarmed, to the mercies of the bear. As he was dying, he told Bruce of Turner's bribe and of the secret agreement, but not where it was hidden.

**W**HEN Dave Turner returned to the clan with his version of the story, they decided that Bruce must die. Dave was sent to Linda's cabin to take her and old Elmira to where—so they were led to



## A Three-Part Novel



Edison Marshall

believe—Bruce lay dead, while a note begging Bruce to rescue Linda from the Turners was left in the cabin where it would be seen as soon as Bruce should arrive.

The Turners seized Bruce, and tying his hands and feet threw him in the pasture where a grizzly would surely return to feast on a half-eaten carcass he had killed and left there the night before. Meanwhile Dave Turner lay dead in the woods where old Elmira's knife had settled a score.

### CHAPTER XXV

**W**HEN Linda returned home, the events of the night partook even of a greater mystery. The front door was open, and she found plenty of evidence that Bruce had returned from his journey. In the center of the room lay his pack, a rifle slanting across it.

At first Linda did not notice the gun in particular. She supposed it was Bruce's weapon and that he had come in, dropped his luggage, and was at present somewhere in the house. True, one chair was upset, but except for an instant's start, she gave no thought to it. She thought that he would probably go to the kitchen first for a bite to eat—rather a common thing for Bruce to do. He was not in this room, however, nor had the lamp been lighted.

Her next idea was that Bruce, tired out, had gone to bed. She went back softly to the front room, intending not to disturb him. Once more she noticed the upset chair. The longer she regarded it, the more of a puzzle it became. She moved over toward the pack and looked casually at the rifle. In an instant more it was in her hands. She saw at once that it was not Bruce's gun. The action, make, and caliber were different. She was not a riflewoman, and the little shooting she had done had been with a pistol; but even a layman could tell this much. Besides, it had certain peculiar notches on the stock that the gun Elmira had furnished Bruce did not have.

She stood a moment in thought. The problem offered no ray of light. She considered what Bruce's first action would have been, returning to the house to find her gone. Possibly he had gone in search of her. She turned and went to the door of his bedroom.

She knocked on it softly. "Are you there, Bruce?" she called.

No answer returned to her. She tried the door and found it unlocked. The room had not been occupied.

Thoroughly alarmed, Linda went back into the front room and tried to decipher the mystery of the strange weapon. She couldn't conceive of any possibility whereby Bruce would exchange his father's

trusted gun for this. Possibly it was an extra weapon that he had procured on his journey. And since no possible gain would come of her going out into the forests to seek him, she sat down to wait for his return. She knew that if she did start out, he might easily return in her absence and be further alarmed.

THE moments dragged by, and Linda's apprehension grew. She took the rifle in her hands, and slipping the lever part-way back, looked to see if there was a cartridge in the barrel. She saw a glitter of brass, and it gave her a measure of assurance. She had a pistol in her own room,—a weapon Elmira had procured, years before, from a passing sportsman,—and for a moment she considered getting it also. She understood its action better and would probably be more efficient with it if the need arose, but for certain never-to-be-forgotten reasons she wished to keep this weapon until the moment of utmost need.

Her whole stock of pistol-cartridges consisted of six—completely filling the magazine of the pistol. Closely watched by the Turners, she had been unable to procure more. Many a dreadful night these six little cylinders of brass had been a tremendous consolation to her. They had been her sole defense, and she knew that in the final emergency she could use them to deadly effect.

The hours passed, and the clouds were starting up from the horizon when she thought she saw Bruce returning. A tall form came swinging toward her over the little trail that led between the tree-trunks. She peered intently—and in one instant more she knew that the approaching figure was not Bruce, but the man she most feared of any one on earth, Simon Turner.

She knew him by his great form, his swinging stride. Her thoughts came clear and true. It was obvious that his was no mission of stealth. He was coming boldly, freely, not furtively; and he must have known that he presented a perfect rifle-target from the windows. Nevertheless it is well to be prepared for emergencies. If life in the mountains teaches anything, it teaches that. She took the rifle and laid it behind a little desk, out of sight. Then she went to the door.

"I want to come in, Linda, for a little talk," Simon told her.

"I told you long ago you couldn't come

to this house," Linda answered through the panels. "I want you to go away."

Simon laughed softly. "You'd better let me in. I've brought word of the child you took to raise. You know who I mean."

Yes, Linda knew. "Do you mean Bruce?" she asked. "I let Dave in tonight on the same pretext. Don't expect me to be caught twice by the same lie."

"Dave? Where is Dave?" The fact was that the whereabouts of his brother had suddenly become considerable of a mystery to Simon. All the way from the pasture where he had left his clan, he had been having black pictures of Dave. He thought about him and Linda out in the darkness together, and his heart had seemed to smoulder and burn in his breast. It had been a great relief to him to find her in the house.

"I wonder—where he is by now," Linda answered in a strange voice. "No one in this world can answer that question, Simon. Tell me what you want."

SHE opened the door. She couldn't bear to show fear of this man. And she knew that an appearance of courage, at least, was the wisest course.

"No matter about him now. I want to talk to you on business. If I had meant rough measures, I wouldn't have come alone."

"No," Linda scorned. "You would have brought your whole murdering band with you. The Turners believe in overwhelming numbers."

The words stung him, but he smiled grimly into her face. "I've come in peace, Linda," he said more gently. "I've come to give you a last chance to make friends."

He walked past her into the room. He straightened the chair that had been upset, smiling strangely the while, and sat down in it. Linda stood erect.

"Then tell me what you have to tell me," she said. "This really isn't the hour for calls."

He looked for a long time into her face. She found it hard to hold her own gaze. Many things could be doubted about this man, but his power and his courage were not among them. The smile died from his lips, the lines deepened on his face. She realized as never before the tempestuous passions and unfathomable intensity of his nature.

"Linda," he said slowly, "I am a stern, hard man. I don't know how to woo. I



don't know that I want to know how, the way it is done by weaker men. It has never been my way to ask for what I wanted. I took it—with this hand."

He held out his powerful hand for her to see. Her eyes, in relief, dropped to it. She saw the strong palm, the iron fingers, the great tendons.

"The way I get things doesn't make any difference," he went on. "People oppose me sometimes, and I blow them aside like straws."

"You mean," she said breathlessly, "that you kill them from ambush?"

Simon went on as if he had not heard. "I take them peaceably if I can—if not I take them anyway. Whether or not they want to be taken doesn't make any difference to me, as long as I get them. Perhaps, if I'd worked differently, if I hadn't been so masterful and so relentless, I'd have won you long ago."

Linda looked up bravely into his face. "No, Simon. You could have never—never—never won me! Oh, can't you see—even in this wild place a woman wants something more than just brute strength and power. There must be gentleness, and a higher strength than yours." Her cheeks blazed. "I don't know what that strength is that I speak of—it is something that the pines have, and the stars. It's a strength I haven't got—perhaps that no woman has; but it is the thing that makes women give their love to men. Simon," she went on with flashing eyes, "no one can deny that strength of yours. It breaks me in two to look you in the eyes. But the man who has the strength that ever woman clings to, that she longs for in all her dreams, has eyes she can look into straight, and not be afraid, but only find strength herself. Maybe I can't make you understand. I can't wholly understand myself. It is a strength greater than that to pull great limbs from trees, and break them to fragments, and beat a strong horse to his knees. It is a strength that makes that terrible strength of yours dissolve into thin air.

"Every woman seeks for it throughout the world, and when she thinks she finds it—that means love," the girl went on. She spoke slowly now—as if moved to prophecy. "I don't mean just infatuation. It is as if it were a predestined thing—a scheme of the universe itself—and it just can't be denied. It's a great, high strength, always so calm and true and

unfaltering; it is a strength that answers and fills up a great need in her, and no matter how high or how low a woman's station is, whether wicked or good, rich or poor, she can't quit praying that she find it or really be contented with any lesser kind of strength."

HER strange speech ended, and they were silent a long time. "And this strength of mine, to break a tree-limb in my hands, can't make up for that visionary strength you are looking for—a strength you can't even name?"

"It can't hope to, Simon."

He studied his great hands. "Then if you don't come to me by your own desire, and because I want you, I have to go back to my own way," he said gravely. "That is the way of strength—that very strength you scorned. But no matter how much you scorn it, it is effective: it has always got me what I wanted and it always will. It will get me what I want now."

The high color died in her face. She wondered if the final emergency had come at last.

"It isn't every man who is brave enough to see what he wants and knock away all obstacles to get it," he went on. "But I am one that is. To pay no attention to methods, only to look forward to the result. That has been my creed. It is my creed now. Many less brave men would fear your hatred—but I don't fear it as long as I possess what I go after. Many of my own brothers hate me, but yet I don't care, as long as they do my will. I've come tonight to make a bargain."

"Tell me what it is and go," the girl said lifelessly.

"On one side is the end to all this conflict, to live as mistress of my great house—"

"My father's house," she corrected.

"It's mine now. I took it my own way. Let me go on. To have what you want—bought by the rich return from my thousands of acres. To have no trouble, and to have all these wives of my brothers and cousins and all the women in these parts look up to you. And I love you, Linda. You know that."

She nodded. No one could doubt this man. His terrible, dark love was all over him—in his glowing eyes, in his drawn, deep-lined face.

"It's a love that is as strong as I am strong myself."

"But it isn't the kind of strength I want—can't you see that?" she pleaded.

"Hear me out. It's your last chance. I love you, and in the end, when you come around to my way of thinking, as a wife always does come around, you'd love me. On the other side—is defeat and no man knows what else. The time is almost up when the title to those lands is secure. Bruce is in our hands—"

She got up, white-faced. "Bruce—"

He arose too. "Yes! Did you think he could stand against us? I'll show him to you in the morning. Tonight he's paying the price for ever daring to oppose my will. Even now he's looking up to the stars, praying to the strength you've been trying to tell me of to come down and save him. But it won't come—because it doesn't exist."

She turned imploring eyes. He saw them; and perhaps, far distant, he saw the light of triumph too. A grim smile came to his lips.

"Simon," she cried, "have mercy!"

The word surprised him. It was the first time she had ever asked this man for mercy. "Then you surrender?"

"Simon, listen to me," she begged. "Let him go—and I won't even try to fight you any more. I'll let you keep those lands, and never try any more to make you give them up. You and your brothers can keep them forever, and we won't try to get revenge on you either. He and I will go away."

HE gazed at her in deepening wonderment. For the moment his mind refused to accept the truth. He only knew that since he had faced her before, some new, great power had come to her. He had known perfectly the call of the blood in her. He had understood her hatred of the Turners—he could hate in the same way himself. He realized her love for her father's home, and how she had dreamed of expelling its usurpers. Yet she was willing to renounce it all. The power that had come to her was one that he himself—a man whose love was only desire and whose code of life was no less cruel and remorseless than that of the Killer himself—could not understand.

"But why?" he demanded. "Why are you willing to do all this for him?"

"Why?" she echoed. Once more the luster was in her dark eyes. "I suppose it is because—I love him."

He looked at her with slowly darkening face. Passion welled within him, and gave way before a wave of blind and devouring jealousy. An oath dropped from his lips—an oath more savage than any wilderness voice. Then he raised his arm and struck her.

He struck her breast. The brutality of the man stood forth at last. No picture that all the dreadful dramas of the wild could portray was more terrible than this. The girl cried out, reeled and fell fainting from the pain, and with smoldering eyes he gazed at her unmoved. Then he turned out the door.

But the curtain of this drama in the mountain home had not yet rung down. Half unconscious, she listened to his steps. He was out in the moonlight, vanishing among the trees. . . . Strange fancies swept her, all in the smallest fraction of an instant, and a voice spoke clearly. . . . With all the strength of her will she dispelled the mists of dawning unconsciousness that the pain had wrought, and crept swiftly to the little desk that sat against the wall. Her hand fumbled in the shadow behind it and brought out a glittering rifle. Then she crept to the open doorway.

LYING on the floor, she raised the weapon to her shoulder. Her thumb pressed back, strong and unfaltering, against the hammer, and she heard it click as it sprung into place. Then she looked along the barrel until she saw the swinging form of Simon through the sights.

There was no remorse in that cold gaze of hers. The wings of death hovered over the man, ready to swoop down. Her finger curled tighter about the trigger. One ounce more pressure, and Simon's trail of wickedness and bloodshed would have come to an end at last. But at that instant her eyes widened with the dawn of an idea.

She knew this man. She knew the hatred that was upon him. And she realized, as if by an inspiration, that before he went to his house and to sleep, he would go once more into the presence of Bruce, confined somewhere among these ridges and suffering the punishment of having opposed his will. Simon would want one look to see how his plan was getting on; perhaps he would want to utter one taunting word. And Linda saw her chance.

She started to creep out the door. Then she turned back, crawled until she was no longer revealed in the silhouette of the



lighted doorway, then got swiftly to her feet. She dropped the rifle and darted into her own room. There she procured a weapon that she trusted more: her little pistol, loaded with six cartridges.

If she had understood the real nature of the danger that Bruce faced, she would have retained the rifle. It shot with many times the smashing power of the little gun, and at long range was many times as accurate; but even it would have seemed an ineffective defense against such an enemy as was even now creeping toward Bruce's body. But she knew that in a crisis, against such of the Turners as she thought she might have to face, it would serve her much better than the more awkward, heavier weapon. Besides, she knew how to wield it, and all her life she had kept it for just such an emergency.

The pain of the blow was almost gone now, except for a strange sickness that had encompassed her. But she was never colder of nerve and surer of muscle. Cunningly she lay down again before she crept through the door, so that if Simon had chanced to look about he would fail to see that she followed him. She crept to the thickets, then stood up. Three hundred yards down the slope she could see Simon's dimming figure in the moonlight, and swiftly she sped after him.

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE shadow that Bruce saw at the edge of the forest could not be mistaken as to identity. The hopes that he had had before, that this stalking figure might be that of a deer or an elk, could no longer be entertained. Bruce watched him with unwinking eyes. The shadow wavered ever so slightly, as the Killer turned his head this way and that. But except to follow it with his eyes, Bruce made no motion. The inner guardians of a man's life—voices that are more to be relied upon than the promptings of any conscious knowledge—had already told him what to do. These monitors had the wisdom of the pines themselves, and they revealed to him his one hope. It was just to lie still, without a twitch of a muscle. It might be that the Killer would fail to discern his outline. Bruce had no conscious knowledge, as yet, that it is movement rather than form to which the eyes of the wild creatures are most re-

ceptive. But he acted upon that fact now as if by instinct. He was not lying in quite the exact spot where the Killer had left his dead the preceding night, and possibly his outline was not enough like it to attract the grizzly's attention. Besides, in the intermittent light it was wholly possible that the grizzly would try to find the remains of his feast by smell alone; and if this were lacking, and Bruce made no movements to attract his attention, he might wander away to other game.

For the first time in his life Bruce knew fear as it really was. It is a knowledge that few dwellers in cities can possibly have, and so few times has it really been experienced in these days of civilization that men have mostly forgotten what it is like. If they experience it at all, it is usually in a dream that arises from the germ-plasm—a nightmare to paralyze the muscles and chill the heart and freeze a man in his bed.

The moon was strange and white as it slipped in and out the clouds, and the forest, mysterious as death itself, lightened and darkened alternately with a strange effect of unreality; but for all that, Bruce could not make himself believe that this was just a dream. The dreadful reality remained that the Killer, whose name and works he knew, was even now investigating him from the shadows one hundred feet away.

The fear that came to him was that of the young world—fear without recompense, direct and primitive fear that grew on him like a sickness. It was the fear that the deer knew as they crept down their dusky trails at night, the fear of darkness and silence and pain and heaven knows what cruelty would be visited upon him in those terrible rending fangs and claws. It was the fear that can be heard in the pack-song in the dreadful winter season, and that can be felt, in strange overtones, in the sobbing wail of despair that the coyote utters in the half-darkness. Bruce had been afraid for his life every moment he was in the hands of the Turners. He knew that if he survived this night he would have to face death again. He had no hopes of deliverance altogether. But the Turners were men, and they worked with knife-blade and bullet, not rending fang and claw. He could face men bravely; but it was hard to keep a strong heart in the face of this ancient fear of beasts.

The Killer seemed disturbed, and moved slowly along the edge of the moonlight. Bruce could trace his movements by the irregularity in the line of shadows. He seemed to be moving more cautiously than ever now. Bruce could not hear the slightest sound.

For an instant he had an exultant hope that the bear would continue on down the edge of the forest and leave him; then his heart stood still as the great beast paused, sniffing. Some smell in the air seemed to reach him, and he came stealing back.

In reality, the Killer was puzzled. He had come to this place straight through the forest with the realization that food—flesh to tear with his fangs—would be waiting for him. But the smell that he had expected had dimmed to such an extent that it promoted no muscular impulse. Perhaps it was only obliterated by a stranger smell—one that was vaguely familiar and wakened a slow, brooding anger in his great beast's heart.

He was not timid; yet he retained some of his natural caution and remained in the gloom while he made his investigations. Probably it was a hunting-instinct alone. He crept slowly up and down the border of moonlight, and his anger seemed to grow and deepen within him. He felt dimly that he had been cheated out of his meal. Once before he had been similarly cheated, but there had been singular triumph at the end of that experience.

All at once a movement, far across the pasture, caught his attention. Remote as it was, he identified the tall form at once—it was just such a creature as he had blasted with one blow a day or two before. But it dimmed in the darkness. It seemed only that some one had come, taken one glance at the drama at the edge of the forest, and had departed. Bruce himself had not seen the figure; and perhaps it was the mercy of fate—not usually merciful—that he did not. He might have been caused to hope again, only to know a deeper despair when the man left him without giving aid. For the tall form had been that of Simon, coming as Linda had anticipated, for a moment's inspection of his handiwork. And seeing that it was good, he had departed again.

The grizzly watched him go, then turned back to his questioning regard of the strange dark figure that lay prone in the grass in front. He knew this strange shadow now. It was just another of that

tall breed he had learned to hate, and it was simply lying prone as his foe had done after the charge beside Little River. In fact, the still-lying form recalled the other occasion with particular vividness. The excitement he had felt before returned to him now: he remembered his disappointment when the whistling bullets from the hillside above had driven him from his dead. But there were no whistling bullets now. Except for them, there would have been a further rapture beside that stream; but he might have it now. The wound at his side gave him a twinge of pain. It served to make his memories all the clearer. The lurid lights grew in his eyes. Rage swept over him.

But he didn't charge blindly. He retained enough of his hunting-caution to know that to stalk was the proper course. It was true that there was no shrubbery to hide him; yet in his time he had made successful stalks in the open even upon deer. He moved further out from the edge of the forest.

At that instant the moon came out and revealed him, all too vividly, to Bruce. The Killer was creeping toward him across the silvered grass.

WHEN Linda left her house, her first realization was the need of caution. It would not do to let Simon see her. And she knew that only her long training in the hills, her practice in climbing the winding trails, would enable her to keep pace with the fast-walking man without being seen.

In her concern for Bruce she had completely forgotten the events of the earlier part of the evening. Wild and stirring though they were, they now seemed to her as incidents of remote years, nothing to be remembered in this hour of crisis. But she remembered them vividly when, two hundred yards from the house, she saw two strange figures coming toward her between the moonlit tree-trunks.

There was very little of reality about either. The foremost figure was bent and strange, but she knew that it could be no one but Elmira. The second, however—half obscured behind Elmira—offered no interpretation of outline at all at first. But at the turn of the trail she saw both figures in vivid profile. Elmira was going homeward, bent over her cane, and she led a saddled horse by its bridle rein.

Still keeping Simon in sight, Linda ran swiftly toward her. She didn't understand



the deep awe that stole over her, an emotion that even her fear for Bruce could not transcend. There was a quality in Elmira's face and posture that she had never seen before. It was as if she were walking in her sleep: she came with such a strange heaviness and languor, her cane creeping through the pine-needles of the trail in front. She did not seem to be aware of Linda's approach until the girl was almost ten feet distant. Then she looked up, and Linda saw the moonlight on her face.

She saw something else too, but she didn't know what it was. Her own eyes widened. The thin lips were drooping; the eyes looked as if she were asleep. The face was a strange net of wrinkles in the soft light. Terrible emotions had but recently died and left their ashes upon it. But Linda knew that this was no time to stop and wonder and ask questions.

"Give me the horse," she commanded. "I'm going to help Bruce."

"You can have it," Elmira answered in an unfamiliar voice. "It's the horse that—that Dave Turner rode here—and which he wont want any more."

Linda took the rein, passed it over the horse's head and started to swing into the saddle. Then she turned with a gasp as the woman slipped something into her hand.

Linda looked down and saw it was the hilt of the knife that Elmira carried with her when the two women had gone with Dave into the woods. The blade glittered; but Linda was afraid to look at it closely. "You might need that too," the old woman said in the silence. "It may be wet—I can't remember. But take it, anyway."

Linda hardly heard. She thrust the blade into the leather of the saddle; then swung onto her horse. Once more she sought Simon's figure. Far away she saw it, just as it vanished into the heavy timber on top of the hill.

She rode swiftly until she began to fear that he might hear the hoof-beats of her mount, then drew up to a walk. And when she had mounted the hill and had followed down its long slope into the glen, the moon went under the clouds for the first time.

She lost sight of Simon at once. Seemingly her effort to save Bruce had come to nothing, after all. But she didn't turn back. There were light patches in the sky, and the moon might shine forth again.

She followed down the trail toward the cleared lands that the Turners cultivated. She went clear to their edge. It was a rather high point, and so she waited here for the moon to emerge again. Never, it seemed to her, had it moved so slowly. But all at once its light flowed forth over the land.

Her eyes searched the distant spaces. But she could catch no glimpse of him between the trees. Evidently he no longer walked in the direction of the house. Then she looked out over the tilled lands.

Almost a quarter of a mile away she saw the flicker of a miniature shadow. Only the vivid quality of the moonlight, against which any shadow was clear-cut and sharp, enabled her to see it at all. It was Simon, and evidently his business had taken him into the meadows. Feeling that she was on the right track at last, she urged her horse forward again. She kept to the shadow of the timber at first. He walked almost parallel to the dark fringe for nearly a mile; then turned off further into the tilled lands. She rode opposite him and reined the horse to watch.

WHEN the distance had almost obscured him, she saw him stop. He waited a long time, then turned back. The moon went in and out of the clouds. Then, trusting to the distance to conceal her, she rode slowly out into the clearing.

Simon reëntered the timber, his inspection of his captive seemingly done. Linda still rode in the general direction he had gone. The darkness fell again, and for the space of perhaps five minutes all the surroundings were obscured. A curious sense of impending events came over her as she headed on toward the distant wall of forest beyond.

Then, the clouds slowly dimming under the moon, the light grew with almost imperceptible encroachments. At first it was only bright enough to show her own dim shadow on the grass. The utter gloom that was over the fields lessened and drew away like receding curtains; her vision ever reached further; the shadows grew more clearly outlined and distinct. Then the moon rolled forth into a wholly open patch of sky, a white sphere with a sprinkling of vivid stars around it, and the silver radiance poured down.

It was like the breaking of dawn. The fields stretched to incredible distances about her. The forest beyond emerged in

distinct outline; she could see every irregularity in the plain. And in one instant's glance she knew that she had found Bruce.

His situation went home to her in one sweep of the eye. Bruce was not alone. Even now a towering figure was creeping toward him from the forest. Linda cried out, and with the long strap of her rein lashed her horse into the fastest pace it knew.

**B**RUCE did not hear her come. He lay in the soft grass, waiting for death. A great calm had come upon him—a strange, quiet strength that the pines themselves might have lent to him; and he made no cry. In this dreadful last moment of despair the worst of his terror had gone and left his thoughts singularly clear. And but one desire was left to him—that the Killer might be merciful and end his frail existence with one blow. It was not a great deal to ask for; but he knew perfectly that only by the mercy of the forest-gods could it come to pass. They are usually not so kind to the dying; and it is not the wild-animal way to take pains to kill at the first blow.

The Killer crept slowly toward him; more and more of his vast body was revealed above the tall heads of the grass. And now all that Bruce knew was a great wonder—a strange expectancy and awe of what the opening gates of Darkness would reveal. . . . The Killer moved with dreadful slowness and deliberation. He was no longer afraid. It was just as it had been before—a warm figure lying still and helpless for his own terrible pleasure. A few more steps, and he would be near enough to see plainly and—after the grizzly way—to fling into the charge. It was his own way of hunting: to stalk within a few score of feet, then to make a furious, resistless rush. He paused, his muscles setting. And then the meadows suddenly rang with the undulations of his snarl.

Almost unconscious, Bruce did not understand what had caused this utterance. But strangely, the bear had lifted his head and was staring straight over him. For the first time Bruce heard the wild beat of hoofs on the turf behind him.

He didn't have time to turn and look. There was no opportunity even for a flood of renewed hope. Events followed upon one another with startling rapidity. The sharp, unmistakable crack of a pistol leaped through the dusk, and a bullet sang

over his body. And then a wild-riding figure swept up to him.

It was Linda, firing as she came. How she had been able to control her horse and ride him into that scene of peril no words may reveal. Perhaps, running wildly beneath the lash, the beast's starting eyes did not discern or interpret the gray figure scarcely more than a score of yards distant from Bruce; and it is true the grizzly's pungent smell—a thing to terrify much more and interpret more clearly than any kind of a dim form in the moonlight—was blown in the opposite direction. Perhaps the lashing strap recalled the terrible punishment the horse had undergone earlier that evening at the hands of Simon, and no room was left for any lesser terror. But most likely of all, just as in the case of brave soldiers riding their horses into battle, the girl's own strength and courage went into him. Always it has been the same: the steed partook of its rider's own spirit.

**T**HE bear reared up, snarling with wrath, but for a moment it dared not charge. The sudden appearance of the girl and the horse held him momentarily at bay. The girl swung to the ground in one leap, fired again, thrust her arm through the loop of the bridle rein, then knelt at Bruce's side. The white blade that she carried in her left hand slashed at his bonds.

The horse, plunging, seemed to jerk her body back and forth, and endless seconds seemed to go by before the last of the thongs was severed. The man helped her all he could. "Up—up into the saddle," she commanded. The grizzly growled again, advancing remorselessly toward them, and twice more she fired. Two of the bullets went home in his great body, but their weight and shocking-power was too little to affect him. He went down once more on all fours, preparing to charge.

Bruce, in spite of the fact that his limbs and ankles had been nearly paralyzed by the tight bonds, managed to grasp the saddle-horn. In the strength of new-born hope, he pulled himself half upon it, and he felt Linda's strong arms behind him pushing him up. The horse plunged in the deadly fear, and the Killer leaped toward them. Once more the pistol cracked. Then the horse broke and ran in a frenzy of terror.

Bruce was full in the saddle by then, and



even at the first leap his arm swept out to the girl on the ground beside him. He swung her toward him, and at the same time her hands caught at the arching back of the saddle. Never had her fine young strength been put to a greater test than when she tried to pull herself on the speeding animal's back. For the first fifty feet she was half-dragged; but slowly—with Bruce's help—she pulled herself up to a position of security.

The Killer's charge had come a few seconds too late. For a moment he raced behind them in insane fury, but only his savage growl leaped through the darkness fast enough to catch up with them. And the distance slowly widened between.

The Killer had been cheated again; and by the same token, Simon's oath had been proved untrue. For once the remorseless strength of which he boasted had been worsted by a greater strength; and love, not hate, was the power that gave it.

Indeed, if Simon could have seen what the moon saw as it peered out from behind the clouds, he would have known that one of the debts of blood incurred so many years ago had even now been paid. Far away on a distant hillside there was one who gave no heed to the fast hoof-beats of the speeding horse. It was Dave Turner; he lay with upturned face, and there were dark stains on the pine-needles about him.

It was the first blood since the reopening of the feud. And the pines, those tall, dark sentinels of the wilderness, seemed to look down upon him in passionless contemplation—as if they wondered at the stumbling ways of men. Their branches rubbed together and made words as the wind swept through them, but no man may say what those words were.

## CHAPTER XXVII

FALL was at hand at Trail's End. One night the summer was still a joyous spirit in the land—birds nested; skies were blue; soft winds wandered here and there through the forest: next morning, and a startling change had come upon the wilderness-world; the spirit of autumn had come with golden wings.

The wild creatures, up and about at their pursuits long before dawn, were the first to see the change. A buck-deer—a noble creature with six points on his spreading horns—got the first inkling of

it when he stopped at a spring to drink. It was true that an hour before he had noticed a curious crispness and a new stir in the air, but he had been so busy keeping out of the ambushes of the Tawny One that he had not noticed it. The air had been chill in his nostrils, but thanks to a heavy growth of hair that—with mysterious foresight—had begun to come upon his body, the cold gave him no discomfort. But it was a puzzling and significant thing that the water he bent to drink had been transformed to something hard and white and burning-cold to the tip of his nose.

It was the first real freeze. True, for the past few nights there had been a measure of tinkling, cobweb frost on the ground in wet places, but even the tender-skinned birds—always most watchful of signs of this kind—had disregarded it. But there was no disregarding this half-inch of blue ice that had covered the spring. The buck-deer struck it angrily with his fore hoofs, broke through and drank, then went snorting up the hill.

His anger was in itself a significant thing. In the long, easy-going summer days Blacktail had almost forgotten what anger was like. He had been content to roam over the ridges, cropping the leaves and grass, avoiding danger, and growing fat. But all at once this kind of existence had palled on him. He felt that he only wanted one thing—not food or drink or safety—but a good, slashing, hooking, hoof-carving battle with another buck of his own species. An unwonted crossness had come upon him, and his soft eyes burned with a blue fire. He remembered the does too—with a sudden leap of his blood—and wondered where they were keeping themselves. Being only a beast, he did not know that this new belligerent spirit was just as much a sign of fall as the soft blush that was coming on the leaves. The simple fact was that fall means the beginning of the rutting season—the wild mating-days when the bucks battle among themselves and choose their harems of does.

He had rather liked his appearance as he saw himself in the water of the spring. The last of the velvet had been rubbed from his horns, and the twelve tines (six on each horn) were as hard and almost as sharp as so many bayonet points. As the morning dawned, the change in the face of nature became ever more manifest. The leaves of the shrubbery began to change

in color. The wind out of the north had a keener, biting quality, and the birds were having some sort of an exciting debate in the tree-tops.

The birds are always a scurried, nervous, rather rattle-brained outfit, and seem wholly incapable of making a decision about anything without hours of argument and discussion. Their days are simply filled with one excitement after another, and they tell more scandal in an hour than the old ladies in a resort manage in the entire summer. This slow transformation of the color of the leaves, not to mention the chill of the frost through their scanty feathers, had created a sensation from one end of bird-land to another. And there was only one thing to do about it: that was to wait until the darkness closed down again, then start away toward the path of the sun in search of their winter-resorts in the South.

The Little People in the forest of ferns beneath were not such gay birds, and they did not have such high-flown ideas as these feathered folk in the branches. They didn't talk such foolishness and small-talk from dark to dawn. They didn't wear gay clothes that weren't a particle of good to them in cold weather. You can imagine them as being good, substantial, middle-class people, much more sober-minded, tending strictly to business and working hard; and among other things they saw no need of flitting down to southern resorts for the cold season. These people—mostly ground-squirrels and gophers and chipmunks and rabbits—had not been fitted by nature for wide travel, and had made all arrangements for a pleasant winter at home. You could almost see a smile on the fat face of a plump old gopher when he came out and found the frost upon the ground; for he knew that for months past he had been putting away stores for just this season. In the snows that would follow he would simply retire into the further recesses of his burrow and let the winds whistle vainly above him.

The larger creatures, however, were less complacent. The wolves—if animals have any powers of foresight whatever—knew that only hard days—not luscious nuts and roots—were in store for them. There would be many days of hunger, once the snow came over the land. The black bears saw the signs, and began a desperate effort to lay up as many extra pounds of fat as possible before the snows broke. Ashur's

appetite was always as much with him as his bobbed-off excuse for a tail; and as he was more or less indifferent to a fair supply of dirt, he always managed to put away considerable food in a rather astonishingly short period of time; and now he tried to eat all the faster in view of the hungry days to come. He would have need of the extra flesh. The time was coming when all sources of food would be cut off by the snows, and he would have to seek the security of hibernation. He had already chosen an underground abode for himself, and there he could doze away in the cold trance through the winter months, subsisting on the supplies of fat that he had stored next to his furry hide.

The greatest of all the bears, the Killer, knew that some such fate awaited him also. But he looked forward to it with wretched spirit. He was master of the forest, and perhaps he did not like to yield even to the spirit of winter. His savagery grew upon him every day, and his dislike for men had turned to a veritable hatred. But he had found them out. When he crossed their trails again, he would not wait to stalk. They were apt to slip away from him in this case, and sting him unmercifully with bullets. The thing to do was to charge quickly and strike with all his power.

The three minor wounds he had received—two from pistol-bullets and one from Bruce's rifle—had not lessened his strength at all. They did, however, serve to keep his blood-heat at the explosive stage most of the day and night.

THE flowers and the grasses were dying; the moths that paid calls on the flowers had laid their eggs and had perished; and winter lurked just beyond the distant mountain. There is nothing so thoroughly unreliable as the mountain autumn. It may linger in entrancing golds and browns month after month until it is almost time for spring to come again; and again it may make one short bow and usher in the winter. To Bruce and Linda, in the old Folger home in Trail's End, these fall days offered the last hope of success in their war against the Turners.

The adventure in the pasture with the Killer had handicapped them to an unlooked-for degree. Bruce's muscles had been severely strained by the bonds: several days had elapsed before he regained their full use. Linda was a mountain



girl, hardy as a deer, yet her nerves had suffered a greater shock by the experience than either of them had guessed. The wild ride, the fear and the stress, and most of all the base blow that Simon had dealt her, had been much even for her strong constitution; and she had been obliged to go to bed for a few days of rest. Old Elmira worked about the house the same as ever, but strange new lights were in her eyes. For reasons that went down to the roots of things, neither Bruce nor Linda questioned her as to her scene with Dave Turner in the coverts; and what thoughts dwelt in her aged mind neither of them could guess.

The truth was that in these short weeks of trial and danger whatever dreadful events had come to pass in that meeting were worth neither thought nor words. Both Bruce and Linda were down to essentials. It is a descent that most human beings—sometime in their lives—find they are able to make; and there was no room for sentimentality or hysteria in this grim household. The ideas, the softnesses, the laws of the valleys were far away from them: they were face to face with realities. Their code had become the basic code of life: to kill for self-protection without mercy or remorse.

They did not know when the Turners would attack. It was the dark of the moon, and the clan would be able to approach the house without presenting themselves as targets for Bruce's rifle. The danger was not a thing of which to conjecture and forget: it was an ever-present reality. Never they stepped out the door, never they crossed a lighted window, never a pane rattled in the wind, but that the wings of Death might have been hovering over them. The days were passing; the date when the chance for victory would utterly vanish was almost at hand, and they were haunted by the ghastly fact that their whole defense lay in a single thirty-three rifle and five cartridges. Bruce's own gun had been taken from him in Simon's house; Linda had emptied her pistol at the Killer.

"We've got to get more shells," Bruce told Linda. "The Turners won't be such fools as to wait until we have the moon again to attack. I can't understand why they haven't already come. Of course, they don't know the condition of our ammunition supply—but it doesn't seem to me that that alone would have held them

off. They are sure to come soon, and you know what we could do with five cartridges."

"I know." She looked up into his earnest face. "We could die—that's all."

"Yes—like rabbits, without hurting them at all. I wouldn't mind dying so much, if I did plenty of damage first. It's death for me anyway, I suppose—and no one but a fool can see it otherwise. There are simply too many against us. But I do want to make some payment first."

Her hand fumbled and groped for his. Her eyes pleaded to him more than any words. "And you mean you've given up hope?" she asked.

He smiled down at her—a grave, strange little smile that went home to her very straight indeed. "Not given up hope, Linda," he said gently. They were standing at the door, and the sunlight—coming low from the south—was on his face. "I've never had any hope to give up—just realization of what lay ahead of us. They are seven or eight, each man armed, each man a rifle-shot. They are certain to attack within a day or two—before we have the moon again. In less than two weeks we can no longer contest their title to the estate. A little month or two more, and we will be snowed in—with no chance to get out at all."

"Perhaps before that," she told him.

"Yes. Perhaps before that."

THEY found a confirmation of this prophecy in the signs of fall without—the coloring leaves, the dying flowers, the new cold breath of the wind. Only the pines remained unchanged: they were the same grave sentinels they always were.

"And you can forgive me?" Linda asked humbly.

"Forgive you?" The man turned to her in surprise. "What have you done that needs to be forgiven?"

"Oh, don't you see? To bring you here—to throw your life away. To enlist you in a fight that you can't hope to win. I've killed you; that's all I've done. Perhaps tonight—perhaps a few days later."

He nodded gravely.

"And I've already killed your smile," she went on, looking down. "You don't smile any more, the way you used to. You're not the boy you were when you came. Oh, to think of it—that it's all been my work!"

The tears leaped to her eyes. He caught

her hands and pressed them between his until pain came into her fingers. "Listen, Linda," he commanded. She looked straight up at him. "Are you sorry I came?"

"More than I can tell you—for your sake."

"But when people look for truth in this world, Linda, they don't take anyone's sake into consideration. They balance all things and give them their true worth. Would you rather that you and I had never met, that I had never received Elmira's message, that you should live your life up here without ever hearing of me?"

She dropped her eyes. "It isn't fair—to ask me that."

"Tell me the truth. Hasn't it been worth while? Even if we lose and die before this night is done, hasn't it all been worth while? Are you sorry you have seen me change? Isn't the change for the better—to be a man instead of a boy?"

He studied her face; and after a while he found his answer. It was not in the form of words at first. As a man might watch a miracle, he watched a new light come into her dark eyes. All the gloom and sorrow of the wilderness without could not affect its quality. It was a light of joy, of exultation, of new-found strength.

"You shouldn't ask me that, Bruce," she said with a rather strained distinctness. "It has been like being born again. There aren't any words to tell you what it has meant to me."

He hadn't wholly forgotten how to smile. His face lighted now. "Linda," he said, "I have no regrets. I've played the game. It has been the worth-while adventure. I love the woods. There's something else in them besides death and hatred and unhappiness. Besides, it seems to me that I can understand the whole world better than I used to. Maybe I can begin to see a big purpose and theme running through it all—but it's not yet clear enough to put into words. One of the things that matters is throwing one's whole life into whatever task he has set out to do—whether he fails or succeeds doesn't seem greatly to matter. The main thing, it appears to me, is that he has tried. To stand strong and calm, and not be afraid—if I can always do it, Linda, it is all I ask for myself: not to flinch now, not to give up as long as I have the strength for another step—and to have you with me."

"Then you and I—take fresh heart?"

"We've never lost heart, Linda."

"Not to give up, but only be glad we've tried?"

"Yes. And keep on trying."

"With no regrets?"

"None—and maybe to borrow a little strength from the pines!"

This was their new pact. To stand firm and strong and unflinching, and never to yield as long as an ounce of strength remained. As if to seal it, her arms crept about his neck and her soft lips pressed his.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

TOWARD the end of the afternoon Linda saddled the horse and rode down the trail toward Martin's store. She had considerable business to attend to. Among other things, she was going to buy thirty-thirty cartridges—all that Martin had in stock. She had some hope of securing an extra gun or two with shells to match. The additional space in her pack was to be filled with provisions.

For they were faced with the unpleasant fact that their larder was nearly empty. The jerked venison was almost gone; only a little flour and a few canned things remained. She only had space for small supplies on the horse's back, and there would be no luxuries among them. Their fare had been plain up to this time; but from now on it was to consist only of such things as were absolutely necessary to sustain life.

She rode unarmed. Without informing him of the fact, the rifle had been left for Bruce. She did not expect for herself a rifle-shot from ambush—for the simple reason that Simon had bidden otherwise; and Bruce might be attacked at any moment.

She was dreaming dreams, that day. The talk with Bruce had given her fresh heart, and as she rode down the sunlit trail, the future opened up entrancing vistas to her. Perhaps they yet could conquer, and that would mean reestablishment on the far-flung lands of her father. Matthew Folger had possessed a fertile farm also, and its green pastures might still be utilized. It suddenly occurred to her that it would be of interest to turn off the main trail, take a little dim path up the ridge that she had discovered years before, and look over these lands. The hour was early: besides, Bruce would find her report of the greatest interest.



She jogged slowly along in the Western fashion—which is quite different from army fashion or sportsman fashion. Western riders do not post. Riding is not exercise to them, but rest. They hang limply in the saddle, and all jar is taken up, as if by a spring, somewhere in the region of the floating-ribs that only a physician can correctly designate. They never sit firm, and as a rule it is not a particularly graceful thing to watch. But Western riders do not care greatly about grace as long as they may encompass their fifty miles a day and still be fresh enough for a country dance at night. There are many other differences in Western and Eastern riding, one of them being the way in which the horse is mounted. Another difference is the riding-habit. Linda had no trim riding-trousers, with tall, glossy boots, red coat, and stock. She did, however, wear a trim riding-skirt of khaki, and a middy blouse that she had washed spotlessly clean with her own hands; and no one would have missed the other things. It is an indisputable fact that she made a rather alluring picture—eyes bright and hair dark and strong arms bare to the elbow—as she came riding down the pine-needle trail.

SHE came to the opening of the dimmer trail and turned down it. She did not jog so easily now. The descent was more steep. She entered a still glen, and the color in her cheeks and the soft brown of her arms blended well with the new tints of the autumn leaves. Then she turned up a long ridge.

The trail led through an old burn—a bleak, eerie place where the fire had swept down the forest, leaving only strange black palings here and there; and she stopped in the middle of it to look down. The mountain-world was laid out below her as clearly as in a relief map. Her eyes lighted as its beauty and its fearsomeness went home to her, and her keen eyes slowly swept over the surrounding hilltops. Then for a long time she sat very still in the saddle.

A thousand feet distant, on the same ridge on which she rode, she caught sight of another horse. It held her gaze, and in an instant she discerned the rather startling fact that it was saddled, bridled, and apparently tied to a tree. Momentarily she thought that its rider was probably one of the Turners who was at present at work on the old Folger farm; yet she knew at once that the tilled lands were

still too far distant for that. She studied closely the maze of light and shadow of the underbrush, and in a moment more distinguished the figure of the horseman.

It was one of the Turners, but he was not working in the fields. He was standing near the animal's head, his back to her; and his rifle lay in his arms. And then Linda understood.

He was simply guarding the trail down to Martin's store. Except for the fact that she had turned off the main trail, she could have by no possibility seen him nor escaped whatever fate he had for her.

She held hard on her faculties and tried to puzzle it out. She understood now why the Turners had not as yet made an attack upon them at their home. It wasn't the Turner way to wage open warfare. For all they knew, Bruce had a large stock of rifles and ammunition—and the Turners did not look forward with pleasure to casualties in their ranks. The much simpler way was to watch the trail. If Linda appeared, the sentry would shoot her horse and capture her. If Bruce tried the excursion, the sentry's target would be somewhat different. He would shoot Bruce down as remorselessly as he would shatter a lynx from a tree-top.

The truth was that Linda had guessed just right. "It's the easiest way," Simon had said. "They'll be trying to get out in a very few days. If the man—shoot straight and to kill! If Linda, plug the horse and carry her back behind the saddle."

Linda turned softly, then started back. She did not even give a second's thought to the folly of trying to break through. She watched him over her shoulder and saw him turn about. Far distant though he was, she could tell by the movement he made that he had discovered her.

She was almost four hundred yards distant by then, and she lashed her horse into a gallop. The man cried to her to halt, a sound that came dim and strange through the burn, and then a bullet sent up a cloud of ashes a few feet to one side. But the range was too far even for the Turners, and she only urged her horse to a faster pace.

She flew down the narrow trail, turned into the main trail, and galloped wildly toward home. But the sentry did not follow her. He valued his precious life too much for that. He had no intention of offering himself as a target to Bruce's rifle

as he neared the house. He headed back to report to Turner.

**YOUNG BILL**—for such had been the identity of the sentry—found his chief in the large field not far distant from where Bruce had been confined. The man was supervising the harvest of the fall growth of alfalfa. The two men walked slowly away from the workers toward the fringe of woods.

"It looks as if we'll have to adopt rough measures, after all," Young Bill began.

Simon turned with flushing face. "Do you mean you let him get past you—and missed him? Young Bill, if you've done that—"

"Wont you wait till I've told you how it happened? It wasn't Bruce; it was Linda. For some reason I can't dope, she went up in the big burn back of me and saw me—when I was too far to shoot her horse. Then she rode like a witch. They'll not take that trail again."

"It only means one of two things," Simon said after a pause. "One of them is to starve 'em out. It wont take long. Their supplies wont last forever. The other is to call the clan and attack—to-night."

"And that means loss of life."

"Not necessarily. I don't know how many guns they've got. If any of you were worth your salt, you'd find out those things. I wish Dave was here."

And Simon spoke the truth if once in his life: he did miss Dave. And it was not that there had been any love lost between them. But the truth was—although Simon would have never admitted it—the weaker man's cunning had been of the greatest aid to his chief. Simon needed it sorely now.

"And we can't wait till tomorrow night—because we've got the moon then," Young Bill added. "Just a new moon, but it would prevent a surprise attack. I suppose you still have hopes of Dave's coming back?"

"I don't see why not. I'll venture to say now he's off on some good piece of business—doing something none of the rest of you have thought of. He'll come riding back one of these days with something actually accomplished. I see no reason for thinking he's dead. Bruce hasn't had any chance at him that I know of. But if I thought he was—there'd be no more waiting. We'd tear down that nest tonight."

Simon spoke in his usual voice—with the same emphasis, the same undertones of passion. But the last words ended with a queer inflection. The truth was that he had slowly become aware that Young Bill was not giving him his full attention, but rather was gazing off toward the forests.

Simon's impulse was to follow the gaze; yet he would not yield to it. "Well?" he demanded. "I'm not talking to amuse myself."

The younger man seemed to start. His eyes were half closed; and there was a strange look of intentness about his facial lines when he turned back to Simon. "You haven't missed any stock?" he asked abruptly.

Simon's eyes widened. "No. Why?"

"Look there—over the forest." Young Bill pointed. Simon shielded his eyes from the sunset glare and studied the blue-green sky-line above the fringe of pines. There were many grotesque black birds wheeling on slow wings above the spot. Now and then they dropped down, out of sight behind the trees.

"Buzzards!" Simon exclaimed.

"Yes," Young Bill answered quietly. "You see, it isn't much over a mile from Folger's house—in the deep woods. There's something dead there, Simon. I think we'd better look to see what it is."

"You think—" Then Simon hesitated, and looked again with reddening eyes toward the gliding buzzards.

"I think—that maybe we're going to find Dave," Young Bill replied.

## CHAPTER XXIX

**T**HE darkness of this October night was before its time. The twilight at Trail's End is never long in duration, because of the simple fact that the mountains cut off the flood of light from the west after the setting of the sun; but tonight there seemed none at all; heavy banks of clouds had swept up from the southeast just after sunset. They were of singular greenish hue, and they hung so low that the tops of near-by mountains were obscured.

The fact that there would be no moon tonight was no longer important. The clouds would have cut off any telltale light that might illumine the activities of the Turners. There would not be even the dim mist of starlight.



Young Bill rode from house to house through the estate—the homes occupied by Simon's brothers and cousins and their respective families. He knocked on each door, and he only gave one little message. "Simon wants you at the house," he said; "and come heeled." Before the night fell in reality, the clan came riding straight for Simon's house.

His horse was saddled too, and he met them in front of his door. In a very few words he made all things plain to them.

"We've found Dave," he told them simply. "Most of you already know it. We've decided there isn't any use of waiting any more. We're going to the Folger house tonight."

The men stood silent, breathing hard. The clouds seemed to lower menacingly toward them. Simon spoke very quietly; yet his voice carried far. In their growing excitement they did not observe the reason—that a deep, puzzling calm had come over the whole wilderness world. Even in the quietest night there is usually a faint background of winds in the mountain-realms—troubled breaths that whisper in the thickets and rustle the dead leaves; but tonight the heavy air had no breath of life.

"Tonight Bruce Folger is going to pay the price, just as I said." He spoke rather boastfully—perhaps more to impress his followers than from impulse. Indeed the passion that he felt left no room for his usual arrogance. "Fire on sight. Bill and I will come from the rear, and we will be ready to push through the back door the minute you break through the front. The rest of you surround the house on three sides. And remember—no man is to touch Linda."

They nodded grimly; then the file of horsemen started toward the ridge. Far distant they heard a sound such as had reached them often in summer but was unfamiliar in fall. It was the faint rumble of distant thunder.

BRUCE and Linda sat in the front room of the Folger house, quiet and watchful and unafraid. It was not that they did not realize their danger. They had simply taken all possible measures of defense, and they were waiting for what the night would bring forth.

"I know they'll come tonight," Linda had said. "Tomorrow night there will be a moon, and though it won't give much

light, it will hurt their chances of success. Besides, they've found that their other plot, to kill you from ambush, isn't going to work."

Bruce nodded, and got up to examine the shutters. He wanted no ray of light to steal out into the growing darkness and make a target. It was a significant fact that the rifle did not occupy its usual place behind the desk. Bruce kept it in his hands as he made the inspection. Linda had her empty pistol, knowing that it might—in the mayhap of circumstance—be of aid in frightening an assailant. Old Elmira sat beside the fire, her stiff fingers busy at a piece of sewing.

"You know," Bruce said to her, "that we are expecting an attack tonight?"

The woman nodded, but didn't miss a stitch. No gleam of interest came into her eyes. Bruce's gaze fell to her work-basket, and something glittered from its depth. Evidently Elmira had regained her knife.

He went back to his chair beside Linda, and the two sat listening. They had never known a more quiet night. They listened in vain for the little night-sounds that usually come stealing, so hushed and tremulous, from the forest. And they both started, ever so slightly, when they heard a distant rumble of thunder.

"It's going to storm," Linda told him.

"Yes. A thunderstorm—rather unusual in the fall, isn't it?"

"Almost unknown. It's growing cold."

They waited a breathless minute; then the thunder spoke again. It was immeasurably nearer. It was as if it had leaped toward them through the darkness with incredible speed in the minute that had intervened. The last echo of the sound was not dead when they heard it a third time.

The storm swept toward them and increased in fury. On a distant hillside the strange file that were the Turners halted, then gathered around Simon. Already the lightning made vivid white gashes in the sky, illumined—for a breathless instant—the long sweep of the ridge above them. "We'll make good targets in the lightning," old Bill said.

"Ride on," Simon ordered. "A man can't find a target in a lightning flash—no time. We're not going to turn back now."

THEY rode on. Far away they heard the whine and roar of wind, and in a moment it was upon them. The forest was

no longer silent. The peal of the thunder was almost continuous.

The breaking of the storm seemed to rock the Folger house on its foundation. Both Linda and Bruce leaped to their feet; but they felt a little tingle of awe when they saw that old Elmira still sat sewing. It was as if the calm that dwelt in the Sentinel Pine outside had come down to abide in her. No force that the world possessed could ever take it from her.

THEY heard the rumble and creak of the trees as the wind smote them, and the flame of the lamp danced wildly, filling the room with flickering shadows. Bruce straightened, the lines of his face setting deep. He glanced once more at the rifle in his hands.

"Linda," he said, "put out that fire. If there's going to be an attack, we'd have a better chance if the room was in darkness. We can shoot through the door then."

She obeyed at once, knocking the burning sticks apart and drenching them with water. They hissed and steamed, but the noise of the storm almost effaced the sound. "Now the light?" Linda asked.

"Yes. See where you are and have everything ready."

She took off the glass shade of the lamp, and the little gusts of wind that crept in the crack of the windows immediately extinguished the flame. The darkness dropped down. Bruce opened the door.

The whole wilderness-world struggled in the grasp of the storm. The scene was such that no mortal memory could possibly forget. They saw it in great, vivid glimpses in the intermittent flashes of the lightning, and the world seemed no longer that which they had come to know. Chaos was upon it. They saw young trees whipping in the wind, their slender branches flailing the air. They saw the distant ridges in black and startling contrast against the lighted sky. The tall tops of the trees wagged back and forth in frenzied signals, their branches smote and rubbed together. And just without their door the Sentinel Pine stood with top lifted to the fury of the storm.

A strange awe swept over Bruce. A moment later he was to behold a sight that for the moment would make him completely forget the existence of the great tree; but for an instant he poised at the brink of a profound and far-reaching dis-

covery. There was a great lesson for him in that dark, towering figure that the lightning revealed. Even in the fury of the storm it still stood infinitely calm, strong as the mountains themselves.

"See!" Linda said. "The Turners are coming."

It was true. Even now the clan had spread out in a great wing and was bearing down upon the house. The lightning showed them in strange, vivid flashes. Bruce nodded slowly.

"I see," he answered. "I'm ready."

"Then shoot them, quick—when the lightning shows them," she whispered in his ear. "They're in range now." Her hand seized his arm. "What are you waiting for?"

He turned to her sternly. "Have you forgotten we only have five shells?" he asked. "Go back to Elmira."

Her eyes met his, and she tried to smile into them. "Forgive me, Bruce. It's hard—to be calm."

But at once she understood why he was waiting. The flashes of lightning offered no opportunity for an accurate shot. Bruce meant to conserve his little supply of shells until the moment of utmost need. The clan drew nearer. They were riding slowly, with ready rifles. And ever the storm increased in fury. The thunder was so close that it no longer gave the impression of being merely sound. It was a veritable explosion just above their heads. The flashes came so near together that for an instant Bruce began to hope they would reveal the attackers clearly enough to give him a chance for a well-aimed shot. The first drops of rain fell on the roof.

His eyes sought for Simon's figure. To Simon he owed the greatest debt, and to lay Simon low might dishearten the whole clan. But although the attackers were in fair range now, scarcely two hundred yards, he could not make him out. They drew closer. He raised his gun to his shoulder, waiting for a chance to fire. And at that instant a resistless force hurled him to the floor.

There was the sense of vast catastrophe, a great rocking and shuddering that was lost in billowing waves of sound; and then a frantic effort to recall his wandering faculties. A blinding light cut the darkness in twain; it smote his eyeballs as if with a physical blow; and summoning all powers of will, he sprang to his feet.

There was only darkness at first; and he



did not understand. But it was of scarcely less duration than the flash of lightning. A red flame suddenly leaped into the air, roared and grew and spread as if scattered by the wind itself. And Bruce's breath caught in a sob of wonder.

The Sentinel Pine, that ancient friend and counselor that stood not over one hundred feet from the house, had been struck by a lightning bolt; its trunk had been cleft open as if by a giant's ax, and the flame was already springing through its balsam-laden branches.

### CHAPTER XXX

**B**RUCE stood as if entranced, gazing with awed face at the flaming tree. There was little danger of the house itself catching fire. The wind blew the flame in the opposite direction: besides, the rains were beating on the roof. The fire in the great tree itself, however, was too well started to be extinguished at once by any kind of rainfall; but it did burn with less fierceness.

Dimly he felt the girl's hand grasping at his arm. Her fingers pressed until he felt pain. His eyes lowered to hers. The sight of that passion-drawn face—recalling in an instant the scene beside the camp-fire his first night at Trail's End—called him to himself. "Shoot, you fool!" she stormed at him. "The tree's lighted up the whole countryside, and you can't miss. Shoot them before they run away."

He glanced quickly out. The clan, which had drawn within sixty yards of the house at the time the lightning struck, had been thrown into confusion. Their horses had been knocked down by the force of the bolt and were fleeing, riderless, away. The men followed them, shouting, plainly revealed in the light from the burning tree. The great torch beside the house had completely turned the tables. And Linda spoke true: they offered the best of targets.

Again the girl's eyes were lurid slits between the lids. Her lips were drawn, and her breathing was strange. He looked at her calmly.

"No, Linda. I can't."

"You can't," she cried. "You coward—you traitor! Kill—kill—kill them while there's time."

She saw the resolve in his face, and she snatched the rifle from his hands. She

hurled it to her shoulder and three times fired blindly toward the retreating Turners.

At that instant Bruce seemed to come to life. His thoughts had been clear ever since the tree had been struck; his vision was straighter and more far-reaching than ever in his life before: but now his muscles awakened too. He sprang toward the girl and snatched the rifle from her hand. She fought for it, and he held her with a strong arm.

"Wait—wait, Linda," he said gently. "You've wasted three cartridges now. There are only two left. And we may need them some other time."

He held her from him with his arm; and it was as if his strength flowed into her. Her blazing eyes sought his, and for a long second their wills battled. And then a deep wonder seemed to come over her.

"What is it?" she breathed. "What have you found out?"

She spoke in a strange and distant voice. Slowly the fire died in her eyes; the drawn features relaxed; her hands fell at her side. He drew her away from the lighted doorway, out of the range of any of the Turners that should turn to answer the rifle-fire. The wind roared over the house and swept by in clamoring fury; the electric storm dimmed and lessened as it journeyed on.

**I**N all the long passage of the years these two were never to forget that moment. The girl watched him, breathlessly, oblivious to all things else. There was something aloof, impassive, infinitely calm about him, and a great, far-reaching understanding was in his eyes. Her own eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"What's the matter, Linda?" he asked quietly. "It's my turn to ask now."

"I don't know," she replied confusedly. "It was just something I told Simon—the night before you were taken—and now it's coming true. It's something that I've been looking for—and it's come at last."

He looked up. "Is it—strength?" he asked.

"Yes. That's it: strength."

"Has it come to you, too?"

"No—just to you—but I can feel it flowing into me. Oh, Bruce, I thought I knew—but I didn't until now. God forgive me for what I said—"

He smiled, ever so slightly. "God doesn't take up his time forgiving little things that people say," the man said from

a far distance. "If He did, He wouldn't have time for His works. Linda, there's something come to me—and I don't know that I can make you understand. It's something that the pine—that great tree that we just saw split open—has been trying to tell me a long time. Oh, can't you see, Linda? There it stood, hundreds of years—so great, so tall, so wise; and in a moment broken like a reed. It takes away my arrogance, Linda. It makes me see myself as I really am. And that means—*power*."

His eyes blazed, and he caught her hands in his.

"It was a symbol, Linda, not only of the wilderness but of powers higher and greater than the wilderness. Powers that can look down, and not be swept away by passion, and not try to tear to pieces those who—in their folly—harm them."

LINDA understood. She knew that this new-found strength did not mean renunciation of her cause. It only meant that the impulse of vengeance was dead within him. She realized that if one of the Turners should leap through the door and attack her, Bruce would kill him without mercy or regret. But the ability to shoot a fleeing enemy in the back, because of wrongs done long ago, was past.

The Turners had gone. The dimming lightning revealed the entire attacking party a half-mile distant and out of rifle-range on the ridge; and Bruce and Linda stole together out into the storm. The green foliage of the tree had already burned away, but some of the upper branches still glowed against the dark sky. A fallen branch smouldered on the ground, hissing in the rain, and it lighted their way.

Awed and mystified, Bruce halted before the ruin of the great tree. He had almost forgotten the stress of the moment before. It did not even occur to him that some of his enemies, unseen before, might still be lurking in the shadow, watching for a chance to harm. They stood a moment in silence. Then Bruce uttered one little gasp and stretched his arm into the hollow that the cleft in the trunk had revealed.

The light from the burning branch behind him had shown him a small dark object that had evidently been inserted in the hollow tree-trunk through some little aperture that had either since been closed

up or they had never observed. It was a leather wallet, and Bruce opened it to Linda's startled gaze. He drew out a single white paper.

He held it in the firelight, and his eyes swept down it. Then he looked up with brightening eyes.

"The secret agreement between your father and mine," he said simply. "And we've won!"

He watched her eyes brighten. It seemed to him that nothing life had ever offered had given him the same pleasure. It was a moment of triumph. But before half of its long seconds were gone, it became a moment of despair.

A rifle spoke from the coverts beyond, one sharp, angry note that rose distinct and penetrating above the noise of the distant thunder. A little tongue of fire darted like a snake's head, in the darkness. And the triumph on Bruce's face changed to a singular look of wonder.

## CHAPTER XXXI

TO Simon the night had seemingly ended in triumph, after all. It had looked dark for a while. The bolt of lightning, setting fire to the pine, had deranged all of his plans. His men had been thrown from their horses, the blazing pine tree had left them exposed to fire from the house, and they had not yet caught their mounts and rallied. Young Bill and himself, however, had tied their horses before the lightning had struck, and had lingered in the thickets in front of the house for just such a chance as had been given them.

Curiosity alone had stayed Simon's anger as Bruce had opened the wallet. Simon saw the gleam of the white paper in the dim light; and then he understood.

Simon was a man of rigid, unwavering self-control; and his usual way was to look a long time between the sights before he fired. Yet the sight of that document—the missing Folger-Ross agreement on which had hung victory or defeat, had meant too much: and his finger pressed back involuntarily against the trigger, before he had taken his usual deliberate aim. Yet from the first second he knew he hadn't completely missed. He raised his rifle to shoot again.

But Bruce's body was no longer revealed. Linda stood in the way, as if she



had deliberately thrown her own body as a shield between.

Simon spoke then—a single, terrible oath of hatred and jealousy. But in a second more he saw his triumph. Bruce swayed, reeled and fell in Linda's arms, and he saw her half drag him into the house.

He stood shivering, but not from the cold that the storm had brought. "Come on," he ordered Young Bill. "I think we've downed him for good; but we've got to get that paper."

But Simon did not see all things clearly. He had little real knowledge of the little drama that had followed his shot from ambush.

Human nature is full of odd quirks and twists, and among other things, symptoms are misleading. There is an accepted way for men to act when they are struck with a rifle-bullet, they are expected to reel, to throw their arms wide, and usually to cry out. The only trouble with these actions, as most men who have been in battlefields know very well, is that they do not usually happen in real life.

Bruce, with Linda's eyes upon him, took one rather long, troubled breath. And he did look somewhat puzzled. Then he looked down at his shoulder.

"I'm hit, Linda," he said in a quiet way. "I think just a scratch."

The girl moved swiftly, yet without giving an impression of leaping, and stood very close and in front of him. In one lightning movement she had made of her own body a shield for his, in case the assassin in the covert should shoot again.

She was trained to mountain ways, and instantly she regained a perfect mastery of herself. Her arms went about and seized his shoulders. "Stagger," she whispered quickly. "Pretend to fall. It's the one chance to save you."

He dispelled the mists in his own brain and obeyed her. He swayed, and her arms went about him. Then he fell forward.

Her strong arms encircled his waist, and with all her magnificent young strength she dragged him to the door. It was noticeable, however—to all eyes except Bruce's—that she kept her own body as much as she could between him and the ambush. In an instant they were in the darkened room. Bruce stood up, once more wholly master of himself.

"You're not hurt bad?" she asked quickly.

"No. Bullet must have just grazed me. But it's bleeding pretty bad."

"Then there's no time to be lost." Her hands in her eagerness went again to his shoulder. "Don't you see—he'll be here in a minute. We'll steal out the back door and try to ride down to the courts before they can overtake us—"

**I**N one instant he had grasped the idea, and he laughed softly in the gloom. "I know. I'll snatch two blankets and the food. You get the horse."

She sprang out the kitchen door, and he hurried into the bedrooms. He snatched blankets from the beds and hurled them over his shoulder. He hooked the camp-ax on his belt, then hastened into the little kitchen. He took up the little sack containing a few pounds of jerked venison, spilled out a few pieces for Elmira, and carried it—with a few pounds of flour—out to meet Linda. The horse still stood saddled, and with deft hands they tied on their supplies and fastened the blankets in a long roll in front of the saddle.

"Get on," she whispered. "I'll get up behind you."

She spoke in the utter darkness; he felt her breath against his cheek. Then the lightning came dimly and showed him her face.

"No, Linda," he replied quietly. "You are going alone—"

She cut him off with a despairing cry. "Oh, please, Bruce—I wont. I'll stay here then—"

"Don't you see?" he demanded. "You can make it out without me. I'm wounded and bleeding, and can't tell how long I can keep up. We've only got one horse, and without me to weigh him down, you can get down to the courts."

"And leave you here to be murdered? Oh, don't waste time any more, I wont go without you. I mean it. If you stay here, I do too."

Once more the lightning revealed her face, and on it was the determination of a zealot. He knew that she spoke the truth. He climbed with some difficulty into the saddle. A moment more, and she swung up behind him.

The entire operation had taken an astonishingly short period of time. Bruce had worked like mad, wholly disregarding his injured arm. The rain had already changed to snow, and the wet flakes beat in his face, but he did not heed them. Just

beyond, Simon with ready rifle crept toward the house.

"Which way?" Bruce asked.

"The out-trail—around the mountain," she whispered. "Simon will overtake us on the other—he's got a fine horse. On the mountain trail we'll have a better chance to keep out of his sight."

She spoke hurriedly, yet conveyed her message with entire clearness. They knew what they had to face, these two. Simon and whoever of the clan was with him would lose no time in springing in pursuit. They each had a strong horse; they knew the trails; they carried long-range rifles and would open fire at the first glimpse of them. Bruce was wounded: slight as the injury was, it would seriously handicap them in such a test as this. Their one chance was to keep to the remote trails, to lurk unseen in the thickets and try to break through to safety. And they knew that only by the doubtful mercy of the forest gods could they ever succeed.

She took the reins and pulled out of the trail; then encircled a heavy wall of brush. She didn't wish to take a risk of Simon's seeing their forms in the dimming lightning and opening fire so soon. Then she turned back into the trail and headed into the storm.

SIMON had clear enough memory of the rifle-fire that Linda had opened upon the clan to wish to approach the house with care. It would be wholly typical of the girl to lay her lover on his bed, then go back to the window to wait for a sight of his assassin. She could look straight along a rifle-barrel! A few moments were lost as Young Bill and himself encircled the thickets, keeping out of the gleam of the smoldering tree. Its light was almost gone: it hissed and glowed in the wet snow.

They crept up from the shadow, and holding their rifles ready, opened the door. They were somewhat surprised to find it unlocked. The truth was that it had been left thus by design: Linda did not wish them to encircle the house to the rear-door and discover Bruce and herself in the act of departure. The room was in darkness, and the two intruders rather expected to find Bruce's body on the threshold.

These were mountain-men, and they had been in rifle duels before. They had the sure instincts of the beasts-of-prey in the

hills without; and among other things they knew it wasn't wise to stand long in an open doorway with the firelight of the ruined pine behind them. They slipped quickly into the darkness.

Then they stopped and listened. The room was deeply silent. They couldn't hear the sound that both of them had so confidently expected—the faint breathing of a dying man. Simon struck a match. The room was quite deserted.

"What's up?" Bill demanded.

Simon turned toward him with a scowl, and the match flickered and burned out in his fingers. "Keep ready. He may be hiding somewhere—still able to shoot."

They stole to the door of Linda's room, and listened. Then they threw it wide. A second match showed this room deserted also.

At that instant both men began to move swiftly. Holding his rifle like a club, Simon swung through into Bruce's room, lighted another match, then darted into the kitchen. In the dim matchlight the truth went home to him.

He turned, eyes glittering. "They've gone—on Dave's horse," he said. "Thank God they've only got one horse between 'em and can't go fast. You ride like hell up the trail toward the store—they might have gone that way. Keep close watch, and shoot when you can make 'em out."

"You mean—" Bill's eyes widened.

"Mean! I mean do as I say. Shoot by sound if you can't see them, and don't lose another second or I'll shoot you too. Aim for the man if a chance offers—but shoot anyway. Don't stop hunting till you find them—they'll duck off into the brush sure. If they get through, everything is lost. I'll take the trail around the mountain."

They raced to their horses, untied them and mounted swiftly. The darkness swallowed them at once.

## CHAPTER XXXII

THE horse walked slowly, head close to the ground. The girl made no effort to guide him. The lightning had all but ceased, and in an instant it had become apparent that only by trusting to the animal's instinct could the trail be kept at all. The snow and the darkness obscured the outline of the ridges against the sky; the trail was wholly invisible.



They were strange, lonely figures in the darkness; and for a long time they rode almost in silence. Then Bruce felt the girl's breath as she whispered.

"I've just been thinking. We might have got on the wrong trail. Perhaps the horse is turned about and is heading back home—toward Simon's stables."

She spoke dully, and he thrust his arm back to her. "Linda, try to be brave," he urged. "We can only take a chance."

The horse plodded a few more steps. "Brave! To think that it is *you* that has to encourage *me*—instead of my trying to keep up your spirits."

"I'm not badly injured," he told her gently. "And there are certain things that have come clear to me lately. One of them is that except for you—throwing your own precious body between—I wouldn't be here at all."

THE feeling that they had lost the trail grew upon them. More than once the stirrup struck the bark of a tree, and often the thickets gave way beneath them. Once they halted to adjust the blankets on the saddle, and they listened for any sounds that might indicate that Simon was overtaking them. But all they heard was the soft rustle of the leaves under the wind-blown snow.

"Linda," he asked suddenly, "does it seem to you to be awfully cold?"

She waited a long time before she spoke. This was not the hour to make quick answers. On any decision might rest their success or failure.

"I believe I can stand it—a while longer," she answered at last.

"But I don't think we'd better try to. It's getting cold. Every hour it's colder, and I seem to be getting weaker. It isn't a real wound, Linda—but it seems to have knocked some of my vitality out of me, and I'm dreadfully in need of rest. I think we'd better try to make a camp."

"And go on by morning light?"

"Yes."

"But Simon might overtake us then."

"We must stay out of sight of the trail. But some way I can't help but hope he won't try to follow us on such a night as this."

He drew up the horse, and they sat in the beat of the snow. "Don't make any mistake about that, Bruce," she told him. "Remember, that unless he overtakes us before we come into the protection of the

courts, his whole fight is lost. It doesn't alone mean loss of the estate—for which he would risk his life just as he has a dozen times. It means defeat—a thing that would come hard to Simon. Besides, he's got a fire within him that will keep him warm."

"You mean—hatred?"

"Hatred—nothing else."

"But in spite of it we must make camp. We'll get off the trail—if we're still on it—and try to slip through tomorrow. You see what's going to happen if we keep on going this way?"

"Then turn off the trail, Bruce," the girl told him.

"I don't know that we're even on the trail."

"Turn off anyway. As long as we stay together—it doesn't matter."

She spoke very quietly. Then he felt a strange thing: a warmth which even that growing, terrible cold could not transcend swept over him. For her little arms had crept out under his arms and encircled his great breast, then pressed with all her gentle strength.

THEY headed off into the thickets, blindly, letting the horse choose the way. They felt it turn to avoid some object in his path—evidently a fallen tree—and they mounted a slight rise. Then they felt the wet touch of fir-branches against their cheeks.

Bruce stopped the horse, and both dismounted. Both of them knew that under the drooping limbs of the tree they would find, at least until the snows deepened, comparative shelter from the storm. Here, in their blankets, they might pass the remainder of the night hours.

Bruce tied the horse, and the girl untied the blankets. Rolled in them, they lay side by side, economizing the last atom of warmth.

The night hours were dreary and long. The snow beat into the limbs above them and sometimes it sifted through. At the first gray of dawn Bruce opened his eyes.

The cold had deepened in these hours of dawn, and after a battle to overcome his stupor, he realized that he was slowly, steadily freezing to death. All he had to do was lie still. Just to close his eyes—and in a little while soft shadows would drop over him.

They would drop over Linda too; perhaps they had already fallen. The war

he had waged so long and so relentlessly would end in blissful calm. Outside there was only snow and cold and pain, only further conflict with tireless enemies, only struggle to tear his agonized body to pieces; and the bitterness of defeat in the end. He saw his chances plain as he lay beneath that gray sky. Even now, perhaps, Simon was upon them. Only two little rifle-shells remained with which to combat him, and he doubted that his wounded arm would hold the rifle steady. There were weary miles between them and any shelter, and only the terrible trackless forest lay between.

Why not lie still and let the curtains fall?

But high and bright above all this burned the indomitable flame of his spirit. To rise, to fight, to struggle on! To stand firm, even as the pines themselves.

He struggled to rise; he shook off the mists of the frost in his brain. He seemed to come to life. Quickly he knelt by Linda and shook her shoulders in his hands. She opened her eyes.

"Get up, Linda," he said gently. "We have to go on."

She started to object, but a message in his eyes kept her from it. His own spirit went into her. He helped her to her feet.

"Help me roll the blankets," he commanded, "and take out enough food for breakfast. We can't stop to eat it here. I think we're in sight of the main trail—whether we can make it out, in the snow, I don't know." She understood: usually the absence of vegetation on a well-worn trail makes a shallow covering of snow appear more level and smooth and thus possible to follow.

**THEY** were strange figures in the snow flurries as they rolled the blankets into a compact bundle and thrust food for breakfast into the pockets of Bruce's coat; the rest, with the blankets, they fastened to the saddle. They untied the horse and for a moment Linda stood holding the reins while Bruce crept back on the hill-side to look for the trail.

The snow swept round them, and they felt the lowering menace of the cold. And at that instant those dread spirits that rule the wilderness, jealous then and jealous still of the intrusion of man, dealt them a final deadly blow.

Its weapon was just a sound—a loud crash in a distant thicket—and a pungent

message on the wind that their human senses were too blunt to receive. Bruce saw the full dreadfulness of the blow, but was powerless to save. The horse suddenly snorted loudly, then reared up. Bruce saw as in a tragic dream the girl struggle to hold him; he saw her pulled down into the snow and the rein jerked from her hand. Then the animal plunged, wheeled and raced at top speed away into the snow-flurries. Some terror that as yet they could not name had broken their control of him and in an instant taken from them this one last hope of safety.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

**B**RUCE walked over to Linda, waiting in the snow on her knees. It was not an intentional posture. She had been jerked down by the plunging horse; she had merely not yet completely risen. But to Bruce the sight of her slight figure, her raised white face, her clasped hands, and the remorseless snow of the wilderness about her, went home very straight indeed.

"We're down to cases at last," he said. "You see what it means?"

She nodded, then got to her feet.

"We can walk out, if we are let alone and given time; it isn't that we are obliged to have the horse. But our blankets are on its back, and this storm's becoming a blizzard. And time is one thing that we don't have. No human being can stand this cold for long, unprotected."

"And we can't keep going—keep warm by walking?"

His answer was to take out his knife and put the point of the steel to his thumb-nail. His eyes strained, then looked up. "A little way," he answered, "but we can't even keep our main directions. The sun doesn't even cast a shadow on my nail to show us which is west. We could keep up a while, perhaps, but there is no end to this wilderness, and—at noon or tonight, the result would be the same."

"And it means—the end?"

"If I can't catch the horse. I'm going now. If we can regain the blankets, by getting in rifle range of the horse, we might make some sort of a shelter in the snow and last out until we can see our way, and get our bearings. You don't know of any shelter—any cave, or cabin where we might build a fire?"



"No. There are some, in the hills, but we can't see our way to find them."

"I know. I should have thought of that. And you see, we can't build a fire here—everything is wet, and the snow is beginning to whirl so we couldn't keep it going. If we should stagger on all day in this storm and this snow, we couldn't endure the night." He smiled again. "I want you to climb a tree—and stay there—until I come back."

She looked at him dully. "What's the use, Bruce. You wont come back. You'll chase the thing until you die—I know you. You don't know when to give up. And if you want to come back, you couldn't find the way. I'm going with you."

"No." Once more she started to disobey, but the grave displeasure in his eyes restrained her. "It's going to take all my strength to fight through that snow; I must go fast—and maybe life and death itself will have to depend on your strength at the end of the trail. You must save it—the little you have left. I can find my way back to you by following my own tracks—the snow wont fill them up so soon. And since I must take the rifle,—to shoot the horse if I can't catch him,—you must climb a tree. You know why."

"Partly to hide from Simon if he comes this way. And partly—"

"Because there's some danger in that thicket beyond!" he interrupted her. "The horse's scare was real; besides, you heard the sound. It might be only a puma. But it might be—the Killer. Swing your arms and struggle all you can to keep the blood flowing. I wont be gone long."

He started to go, and she ran after him with outstretched arms. "Oh, Bruce," she cried, "come back soon—soon. Don't leave me to die alone."

He whirled, took two paces back, and his arms went about her. He had forgotten his injury long since. He kissed her cool lips and smiled into her eyes. Then at once the flurries hid him.

THE girl climbed up into the branches of a fir tree. In the thicket beyond, a great gray form tacked back and forth, trying to catch a scent that he had caught but dimly a second before and had lost. It was the Killer, and his temper was lost long ago in the whirling snow. His anger was upon him, partly from the discomfort of the storm, partly from the constant pain of three bullet wounds in his

powerful body. Besides, he realized the presence of his old and greatest enemy—those tall slight forms that had crossed him so many times, that had stung him with their bullets, and whose weakness he had learned.

The wind was variable, and all at once he caught the scent plain. He lurched forward, crashed again through the brush, and walked out into the snow-swept open. Linda saw him with perfect clearness, and at first she hung perfectly motionless, hoping to escape his gaze. She believed that the Killer could not climb up to her, yet she had no desire to see him raging below her, reaching, possibly trying to shake her from the limbs. Her muscles were stiff and inactive from the cold, and she doubted her ability to hold on. Besides, in that dread moment she found it hard to believe that the Killer would not be able to swing into the lower limbs, high enough to strike her down.

He didn't seem to see her. His eyes were lowered: besides, it was never the grizzly way to search the branches of a tree. The wind blew the message that he might have read clearly in the opposite direction. She saw him walk slowly across the snow, head lowered, a huge gray ghost in the snow-flurries not one hundred feet distant. Then she saw him pause, with lowered head.

In the little second before the truth came to her, the bear had already turned. Bruce's tracks were already dimmed by the snow, but the Killer interpreted them truly. She saw too late that he had crossed them, read their message, and now had turned into the clouds of snow to trace them down.

For an instant she gazed at him in speechless horror; and already the flurries had almost obscured his gray figure. Desperately she tried to call his attention from the tracks. She called, then she rustled the branches as loudly as she could. But the noise of the wind obscured what sound she made, and the bear was already too absorbed in the hunt to turn and see her. As always in the nearing presence of a foe, his rage grew upon him.

Sobbing, Linda swung down from the tree. She had no conscious plan of aid to her lover. She only had a blind instinct to seek him, to try to warn him of his danger, and at least to be with him at the death. The great tracks of the Killer, seemingly almost as long as her own arm,

made a plain trail for her to follow. She too struck off into the storm-swept cañon.

And the forest-gods who dwell somewhere in the region where the pine-tops taper into the sky, and who pull the strings that drop and raise the curtain and work the puppets that are the players of the wilderness dramas, saw a chance for a great and tragic jest in this strange chase over the snow. The destinies of Bruce, Linda and the Killer were already converging on this trail that all three followed—the path that the runaway horse made in the snow. Only one of the great forces of the war that had been waged at Trail's End was lacking, and now he came also.

SIMON TURNER had ridden late into the night, and from before dawn, with his remorseless fury he had goaded on his exhausted horse, he had driven him with unpitied strength through coverts, over great rocks, down into rocky cañons in search of Bruce and Linda; and now, as the dawn broke, he thought that he had found them. He had suddenly come upon the tracks of Bruce's horse in the snow.

If he had encountered them farther back, when the animal had been running wildly, he might have guessed the truth and rejoiced. No man would attempt to ride a horse at a gallop through that trailless stretch. But at the point he found them, most of the horse's terror had been spent, and it was walking leisurely, sometimes lowering its head to crop the shrubbery. The trail was comparatively fresh too, or else the fast-falling snow would have already obscured it. Simon thought that his hour of triumph was near.

But it had come none too soon. And Simon—out of passion-filled eyes—looked and saw that it would likely bring death with it. He realized his position fully. The storm was steadily developing into one of those terrible mountain blizzards in which without shelter, no human being can live. He was far from his home; he had no blankets; and he could not find his way. Yet he would not have turned back if he could. In all the manifold mysteries of the wilderness there was no stranger thing than this: that in the face of his passion Simon had forgotten and ignored even that deepest instinct, self-preservation. Nothing mattered any more except his hatred; no desire was left except its expression.

In all the ancient strife and fury and ceaseless war of the wild through which he had come, there was no passion to equal this. The Killer was content to let the wolf slaughter the fawn for him. The cougar will turn from its newly slain prey at the sight of some danger in the thickets. But Simon could not turn. Death lowered its wings upon him as well as upon his enemy; yet the fire in his heart and the fury in his brain shut out all thought of it.

He sprang off his horse better to examine the tracks, and then stood, half bent over, in the snow.

BRUCE FOLGER headed swiftly up the trail his runaway horse had made. It was, he thought, his last effort, and he gave his full strength to it. Weakened as he was by the cold and the wound, he could not have made headway at all except for the fact that the wind was behind him.

The snow fell ever faster, in larger flakes, and the track dimmed before his eyes. It was a losing game. Terrified not only by the beast that had stirred in the thicket but by the ever-increasing wind as well, Bruce knew how little chance he had of overtaking the animal. The cold was deepening; the storm was increasing in fury. His bones ached; his wounded arm felt numb and strange; the frost was getting into his lungs. The wind's breath was ever keener, its whistle was louder in the pines.

The tracks grew more dim, and he began to be afraid that the falling flakes would obscure his own tracks so that he could not find his way back to Linda. And he knew, beyond all other knowledge, that he wanted her with him when the Shadows dropped down for good and all. He couldn't face them bravely alone. He wanted her arms about him: the Flight would be easier then.

"Oh, what's the use!" he suddenly exclaimed to the wind. "Why not give up and go back?"

He halted in the trail and started to turn. But at that instant a banner of wind swept down into his face, and the eddy of snow in front of him was brushed from his gaze. Just for the space of a breath the cañon for perhaps a hundred feet distant was partly cleared of the blinding streamers of snow. And he uttered a long gasp when he saw, thirty yards distant



and at the farthest reaches of his sight, the figure of a saddled horse.

His gun leaped to his shoulder; yet his eagerness did not cost him his self-control. He gazed quietly along the sights until he saw the animal's shoulder revealed between them. His finger pressed back against the trigger.

The horse rocked down, seemingly instantly killed, and the snow swept in between. Bruce cried out in triumph. Then he broke into a run and sped through the flurries toward his dead.

But it came about that there was other business for Bruce than the recovery of his blankets that he had supposed would be tied to saddle. The snow was thick between, and he was within twenty feet of the animal's body before he glimpsed it clearly again. And he felt the first wave of wonder, the first promptings of the thought that the horse he had shot down was not his, but one that he had never seen before.

But there was no time for the thought to go fully home. Some one cried out,—a strange, half-snarl of hatred and triumph that was almost lacking in all human quality,—and a man's body leaped toward him from the thicket before which the horse had fallen. It was Simon; Bruce had mistaken Turner's horse for the one that had run away.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV

**E**VEN in the instant crisis Bruce did not forget that he had as yet neglected to expel the empty cartridge from the barrel of his rifle and to throw in the other from the magazine. He tried to get the gun to his shoulder, working the lever at the same time. But Simon's leap was too fast for him. Simon's strong hand seized the barrel of the gun and snatched it from his hands. Then the assailant threw it back, over his shoulder, and it fell softly in the snow. He waited, crouched.

The two men stood face to face at last. Bruce straightened, and his face was of iron. "Well, Simon," he said, "you've come."

The man's eyes burned red through the snow. "Of course I would. Did you think you could escape me?"

"It didn't much matter whether I escaped you or not," Bruce answered rather

quietly. "Neither one of us is going to escape the storm and the cold. I suppose you know that."

"I know that *one* of us is. Because one of us is going out—a more direct way—first. Which that one is doesn't much matter." His great hands clasped. "Bruce, when I snatched your gun right now I could have done more. I could have jumped a few inches farther and had you around the waist—taken by surprise. The fight would have been already over. I think I could have done more than that, even—with my own rifle as you came up. It's laying there, just beside the horse."

But Bruce didn't turn his eyes to look at it. He was waiting for the attack.

"I could have snatched your life just as well, but I wanted to wait," Simon went on. "I wanted to say a few words first, and wanted to master you—not by surprise—but by greater strength alone."

It came into Bruce's mind that he could tell Simon of the wound near his shoulder, how because of it no fight between them would be a fair test of superiority; yet the words didn't come to his lips. He could not ask mercy of this man, either directly or indirectly, any more than the pines asked mercy of the snows that covered them.

"You were right when you said there is no escaping from this storm," Simon went on. "But it doesn't much matter. It's the end of a long war, and what happens to the man who wins is neither here nor there. It seems more fitting that we should meet just as we have, that Death should be waiting at the end for the one of us who wins. It's so like this damned wilderness we live in."

Bruce gazed in amazement. The dark and dreadful poetry of this man's nature was coming to the fore. The wind made a strange echo to his words—a long, wild shriek as it swept over the pines.

"Then why are you waiting?" Bruce asked.

"So you can understand everything. But I guess that time is here. There is to be no mercy at the end of this fight, Bruce: I ask none and will give none. You have made war against me; you've escaped me many times, you've won the woman I want; and this is to be my answer." His voice dropped a note, and he spoke more quietly. "I'm going to kill you, Bruce."

"Then try it," Bruce answered steadily. "I'm in a hurry to go back to Linda."

THE smoldering wrath blazed up at the words. Both men seemed to spring at the same time. Their arms flailed, then interlocked; and they rocked a long time—back and forth in the snow.

They fought in silence. The flurries dropped over them, and the wind swept by in its frantic wandering. Bruce called upon his last ounce of reserve strength—that mysterious force that always sweeps to a man's aid in a moment of crisis.

For the first time he had full realization of Simon's mighty strength. With all the power of his body he tried to wrench him off his feet, but it was like trying to tear a tree from the ground.

But surprise at the other's power was not confined to Bruce alone. Simon knew that he had an opponent worthy of the iron of his own muscles, and he put all his terrible might into the battle. He tried to reach Bruce's throat, but the man's strong shoulder held the arm against his side. Simon's great hand reached to pin Bruce's arm—and for the first time discovered the location of his weakness.

He saw the color sweep from Bruce's face, and water-drops that were not melted snow came upon it. It was all the advantage needed between such evenly matched contestants. And Simon forgot his spoken word that he wished this fight to be a test of superiority alone. His fury swept over him like a flood and effaced all things else; and he centered his whole attack upon Bruce's wound.

In a moment he had him down, and he struck once into Bruce's white face with his terrible knuckles. The blow sent a strange sickness through the younger man's frame; and he tried vainly to struggle to his feet. "Fight! Fight on!" was the message his mind dispatched along his nerves to his tortured muscles; but for an instant they wholly refused to respond. They had endured too much. Total unconsciousness hovered above him, ready to descend.

Strangely, he seemed to know that Simon had crept from his body and was even now reaching some dreadful weapon that lay beside the dead form of the horse. In an instant he had it, and Bruce's eyes opened in time to see him swinging it aloft. It was his rifle, and Simon was aiming a murderous blow at him with its stock.

There was no chance to ward it off. No human skull could withstand its shatter-

ing impact. Bruce saw the man's dark face with the murder-madness upon it, the blazing eyes, the lips drawn back. The muscles contracted to deal the blow.

But that war of life and death in the far reaches of Trail's End was not to end so soon. At that instant there was an amazing intervention.

A GREAT gray form came lunging out of the snow-flurries. Their vision was limited to a few feet, and so fast the creature came, with such incredible smashing power, that he was upon them in a breath. It was the Killer in the full glory of the charge; and he had caught up with them at last.

Bruce saw only his great figure looming just over him. Simon, with amazing agility, leaped to one side just in time, then battered down the rifle stock with all his strength. But the blow was not meant for Bruce. It struck where aimed—the great gray shoulder of the grizzly.

Then, dimmed and half obscured by the snow-flurries, there began as strange a battle as the great pines above them had ever beheld. The Killer's rage was upon him, and the blow at the shoulder had arrested his charge for a moment only. Then he wheeled, a snarling, fighting monster with death for any living creature in the blow of his forearm, and lunged toward Simon again.

It was the Killer at his grandest. The little eyes blazed; the neck-hair bristled; he struck with fore-arms and jaws—lashing, lunging, recoiling—all the terrible might and fury of the wilderness centered and personified in his mighty form. Simon had no chance to fire his rifle. In the instant that he would raise it, those great claws and fangs would be upon him. He swung it as a club, striking again and again, dodging the sledge-hammer blows, and springing aside in the second of the Killer's lunges. He was fighting for his life, and no eye could bemean that effort.

Simon himself seemed exalted, and for once it appeared that the grizzly had found an opponent worthy of his might. It was all so fitting—that these two mighty powers, typifying all that is remorseless and terrible in the wild, should clash at last in the gathering fury of the storm. They were of one kind, and they seemed to understand each other. The lust and passion and fury of battle was upon them both.



Man and beast and storm—those three great foes were arrayed the same as ever. Time swung backward a thousand thousand years. The storm itself gathered in force. The snow seemed to come from all directions in great clouds and flurries and streamers, and time after time it wholly hid the contestants from Bruce's eyes. At such times he could tell how the fight was going by sound alone—the snarls of the Killer, the wild oaths of Simon, the impact of the descending rifle-butt.

Bruce gave no thought to taking part. Both were enemies; his own strength seemed gone. The cold deepened: Bruce could feel it creeping into his blood, halting its flow, threatening the spark of life within him.

THE fight seemed to go on forever. Presently Linda came stealing out of the snow—following the grizzly's trail—and crept beside Bruce. She crouched by him, and his arm went about her as if to shield her. She had heard the sounds of the battle from afar; she had thought that Bruce was the contestant, and her terror had left a deep pallor upon her face; yet now she gazed upon that frightful conflict with a strange and enduring calm. Both she and Bruce knew that there was but one sure conqueror, and that was Death. If the Killer survived the fight and through the mercy of the forest gods spared their lives, there remained the blizzard. They could conceive of no circumstances whereby further effort would be of the least avail. The horse on which was tied their scanty blankets was miles away by now; its tracks were obscured in the snow, and they could not find their way to any shelter that might be concealed among the ridges.

The scene grew in fury. The last burst of strength was upon Simon: in another moment he would be exhausted. The bear had suffered terrible punishment from the blows of the rifle-stock. He recoiled once more, then lunged with unbelievable speed. His huge paw, with all his might behind it, struck the weapon from Simon's weakening hand.

It shot through the air seemingly almost as fast as the bullets it had often propelled from its muzzle and struck the trunk of a tree. So hard it came that the lock was shattered: they heard the ring of metal. The bear rocked forward once more and struck again. And then all the

sound that was left was the eerie complaint of the wind.

Simon lay still. The brave fight was over. His trail had ended fittingly—in the grip of such powers as were typical of himself. But the bear did not leap upon him to tear his flesh. For an instant he stood like a statue in gray stone, head lowered, as if in a strange attitude of thought. The snow swept over his huge form.

Linda and Bruce gazed at him in silent awe. They felt no fear; no room in their hearts was left for it after the tumult of that battle. The great grizzly uttered one deep note and half turned about. His eyes rested upon the twain, but he did not seem to see them.

The fury was dead within him: this much was plain. The hair began to lie down at his shoulders. The terrible eyes lost their fire. Then he turned again and headed off slowly, deliberately, directly into the face of the storm.

#### CHAPTER XXXV

THE flurries almost immediately obscured the Killer's form, and Bruce turned his attention back to Linda. "It's the end," he said quietly. "Why not here—as well as any where else?"

But before the question was finished, a strange note had come into his voice. It was as if his attention had been called from his words by something much more momentous. The truth was that it had been caught and held by a curious expression on the girl's face.

Some great idea, partaking of the nature of inspiration, had come to her. He saw it in the growing light in her eyes, the deepening of the soft lines of her face. All at once she sprang to her feet.

"Bruce!" she cried. "Perhaps there's a way yet. A long, long chance, but maybe a way yet. Get your rifle—Simon's is broken—and come with me."

Without waiting for him to rise, she struck off into the storm, following the huge footprints of the bear. The man struggled with himself, summoned all that was left of his reserve supply of strength, and leaped up. He snatched his rifle from the ground where Simon had thrown it, and in an instant was beside her. Her cheeks were blazing.

"Maybe it just means further torture,"

she confessed to him "but don't you want to make every effort we can to save ourselves? Don't you want to fight till the last breath?"

She glanced up, and saw her answer in the growing strength of his face. Then his words spoke too. "As long as the slightest chance remains," he replied.

"And you'll forgive me if it comes to nothing?"

He smiled, dimly. She took fresh heart when she saw he still had strength enough to smile. "You don't have to ask me that."

"A moment ago an idea came to me—it came so straight and sure it was as if a voice told me," she explained hurriedly. She didn't look at him again. She kept her eyes intent upon the great footprints in the snow. To miss them for a second meant, in the world of whirling snow, to lose them forever. "It was after the bear had killed Simon and had gone away. He acted exactly as if he thought of something and went out to do it—exactly as if he had a destination in view. Didn't you see—his anger seemed to die in him, and he started off in the *face of the storm*. I've watched the ways of animals too long not to know that he had something in view. It wasn't food: he would have attacked the body of the horse, or even Simon's body. If he had just been running away or wandering, he would have gone with the wind, not against it. He was weakened from the fight, perhaps dying—and I think—"

He finished the sentence for her, breathlessly. "That he's going toward shelter!"

"Yes. You know, Bruce, the bears hibernate every year. They always seem to have places all chosen—usually caverns in the hillsides or under uprooted trees; and when the winter cuts off their supplies of food, they go straight toward them. That's my one hope now—that the Killer has gone to some cave he knows about to hibernate until this storm is over. I think from the way he started off, so sure and so straight, that it's near. It would be dry and out of the storm, and if we could take it away from him, we could make a fire that the snow wouldn't put out. It would mean life—and we could go on when the storm is over."

"You remember—we have only one cartridge."

"Yes, I know—I heard you fire. And it's only a thirty-thirty at that. It's a

risk—as terrible a risk as we've yet run. But it's a chance."

THEY talked no more. Instead they walked as fast as they could into face of the storm. It was a moment of respite. This new hope returned some measure of their strength to them. They walked much more swiftly than the bear, and they could tell by the appearance of the tracks they were but a few yards behind him.

"He won't smell us, the wind blowing as it is," Linda encouraged. "And he won't hear us, either."

Now the tracks were practically unspotted with the flakes. They strained into the flurries. Now they walked almost in silence, their footfall muffled in the snow.

They became aware that they were mounting a low ridge. They left the underbrush and emerged out in the open timber. And all at once Bruce, who now walked in front, paused with lifted hand.

He pointed. Dim through the flurries, they made out the outline of the bear. And Linda's inspiration had come true.

There was a ledge of rocks just in front, a place such as the rattlesnakes had loved in the blasting sun of summer; and a black hole yawned in its side. The aperture had been almost covered with the snow, and they saw that the great creature was scooping away the remainder of the white drift with his paw. As they waited, the opening grew steadily wider, revealing the mouth of a little cavern in the face of the rock.

"Shoot!" Linda whispered. "If he gets inside, we won't be able to get him out."

But Bruce shook his head, then stole nearer. She understood. He had only one cartridge, and he must not take the risk of wounding the animal. The fire had to be centered on a vital place.

He walked steadily nearer until it seemed to Linda he would advance straight into reach of the terrible claws. He held the rifle in his arms; his jaw was set, his face white, his eyes straight and strong with the strength of the pines themselves. It was courage of the coldest, most unflinching, unfaltering sort. He went as softly as he could—nearer, ever nearer, the rifle cocked and ready in his hands.

The Killer turned its head, saw him. Rage flamed again in its eyes. It half turned about, then poised to charge.

The gun moved swiftly, easily to the



man's shoulder, his chin dropped down; his straight eyes gazed along the barrel. In spite of his wound, never had human arms held more steadily than his then. And he marked the little space of gray squarely between the two reddening eyes.

The finger pressed back steadily against the trigger. The rifle cracked in the silence. And then there was a curious effect of tableau, a long second in which all three figures stood deathly still.

The bear leaped forward, and it seemed wholly impossible to Linda that Bruce could leap aside in time to avoid the blow. She cried out in horror as the great paws whipped down in the place where Bruce had stood. But the man had been prepared for this very recoil, and he had sprung aside just as the claws raked past.

And the Killer would hunt no more in Trail's End. At the end of that leap he fell, his great body quivering strangely in the snow. The lead had gone straight home where it had been aimed, and the charge itself had been mostly muscular reflex. The Killer lay still at last, a gray, mammoth figure that was majestic even in death.

No more would the deer shudder with terror at the sound of his heavy step in the thicket. No more would the herds fly into stampede at the sight of his great shadow on the moonlit grass. The last of the Oregon grizzlies had gone the way of all his breed. To Bruce and Linda, standing breathless and awed in the snow-flurries, his death imaged the passing of an old order—the last stand that the forces of the wild had made against conquering man. But there was pathos in it too. There was the symbol of mighty breeds humbled and destroyed.

But the pines were left. Those eternal symbols of the wilderness—and of powers beyond the wilderness—still stood straight and grand and impassive above them. While these two lived, at least, they would still keep their watch over the wilderness; they would still stand erect and brave to the buffeting of the storm and snow, and in their shade dwelt strength and peace.

THE cavern that was revealed to them had a rock floor, and had been hollowed out by running water in ages past. Bruce built a fire at its mouth of some of the long tree-roots that extended down into it, and the life-giving warmth was

a benediction. Already the drifting snow had begun to cover the aperture.

"We can wait here until the blizzard is done," Bruce told Linda as she sat beside him in the soft glow of the fire. "We have a little food, and we can cut more from the body of the grizzly when we need it. There's dead wood under the snow. And when the storm is over, we can get our bearings and walk out."

She sat a long time without answering. "And after that?" she asked.

He smiled. "No one knows. It's ten days before the twentieth—the blizzards up here never last over three or four days. We've plenty of time to get the document down to the courts. We've won, Linda."

His hand groped for hers, and he laid it against his lips. With her other hand she stroked his snow-wet hair. Her eyes were lustrous in the firelight.

"And after that—after all that is settled? You will come back to the mountains?"

"Could I ever leave them!" he exclaimed. "Of course, Linda. But I don't know what I can do up here—except maybe to establish my claim to my father's old farm. There's a hundred or so acres. I believe I'd like to feel the handles of a plow in my palms."

"It was what you were made for, Bruce," she told him. "It's born in you. There's a hundred acres there—and three thousand—somewhere else. You've got new strength, Bruce. You could take hold and make them yield up their hay and their crops—and fill all these hills with the herds." She stretched out her arms. Then all at once she dropped them almost as if in supplication. But her voice had regained the old merry tone he had learned to love when she spoke again. "Bruce, have I got to do all the asking?"

His answer was to stretch his great arms and draw her into them. His laugh rang in the cavern.

"Oh, my dearest!" he cried. The eyes lighted in his bronzed face. "I ask for everything—everything—bold that I am! And what I want worst—this minute—"

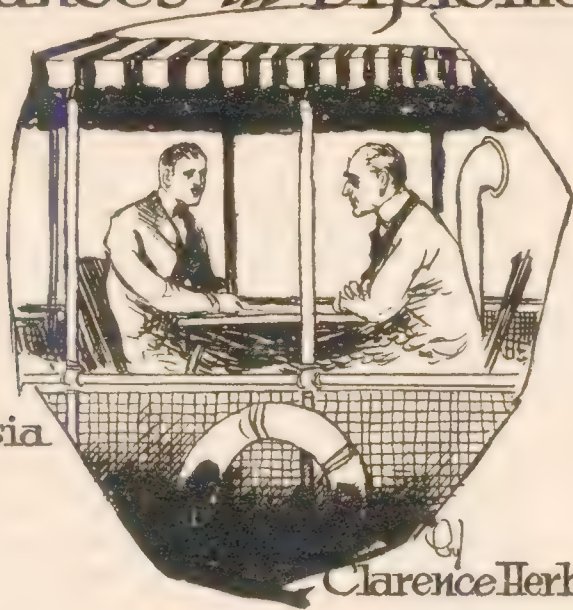
"Yes?"

"Is just—a kiss."

She gave it to him with all the tenderness of her soft lips. . . . The snow sifted down outside. Again the pines spoke to one another, but the sadness seemed mostly gone from their soft voices.

# Free Lances *in* Diplomacy

*The*  
Dreams of Asia



Clarence Herbert New

**I**F one were asked to name offhand the five most beautiful harbors on the globe in the sequence of their natural attractiveness, the loyal Philadelphian might claim first place for the Delaware, off Camden. But few world-travelers would agree with him. Lest there should be argument upon this point, it may be stated that the five most wonderful and beautiful harbors in the world are first, Rio de Janeiro—which nobody will dispute, then Hongkong, Nagasaki, Naples, and Sydney, N. S. W. And before any brethren or sistern rise to protest rival claims of other places, it is required that they must first have visited these five.

With the faint refrain of "Un bel Di" haunting in our ears, let us lounge in Canton chairs under the after-deck awning of a famous deep-sea yacht, the *Ranée Sylvia*, as she glides slowly past the rocky islet of Papenberg and over the crystal waters of Nagasaki's landlocked bay, dropping anchor off Deshima, and firing the customary salute to the Japanese fortifications. The sun has just set beyond her wake. From among the camphor-trees and grotesque conifers upon the steep hill-sides fireflies begin to glow faintly in the purple twilight—oiled paper lanterns in tier upon tier of Japanese houses whose walls are merely successions of sliding panels. Above the Bund, Sagirimatsu, the foreign quarter, with somewhat more sub-

stantial residences of Europeans and Americans along its terraces. Above Sagirimatsu the Buddhist temples and tree-crowned summits of the hills twelve to fifteen hundred feet above the harbor, which is between two and three miles long. Beyond Deshima, where the early Dutch and Portuguese traders were sequestered,—prisoners, to all intents,—the native city, with its network of narrow but populous canals and its lovely toy houses running up the hill-ravines. A soft murmur of voices, the strumming of *samisens* and *biwas*; from a T. K. K. steamer, coaling, echoes of a dreamy waltz played by its steward orchestra; over the western hills a crescent moon.

Before the Russo-Japanese War, when Nagasaki was the winter rendezvous of both Russian and French Asiatic squadrons, with officers of both nations in residence on the hills, the great Oriental and Pacific liners made weekly calls at the port on their way to or from Shanghai. There were usually two or more deep-sea yachts anchored off the Bund as well. Since then most of the Russians have disappeared; a few liners of the larger companies appear, but only once a month, and visiting yachts are more of a rarity. Your Japanese friends will tell you that the port is slowly decaying for lack of trade and patronage; yet the boats of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha, Toyo Kisen Kaisha, Osaka



Shosen Kaisha and numerous Japanese inter-island boats seem to have all the business they can handle. There are always a number of them in port. And the underlying cause for the seeming discrepancy? Perhaps this narrative will make things a bit clearer.

IN one of the deck-chairs on the *Ranée*, George Trevor, Earl of Dyvnaint, had been comfortably chatting with his friend of many years, Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan. Countess Nan of Dyvnaint was below, as were some guests from the Governor's official family at Hongkong, dressing for dinner. And had one been asked to mention three persons more sure of their welcome in any Japanese port, he would have found it difficult to do so—as far as he might gather from any expression of native opinion. The Earl and Countess had won enviable reputation for brilliant services during the war, and from their social position at home might be considered representatives of their government in any other country; yet they had never been considered politicians, but rather as people famous on the merits of their own personality, vastly influential because of their wealth, standing and wide acquaintance, but having no taste for state affairs except in a broad general way. Sir Abdool had been closely associated with them for many years. In short—three distinguished personages who had every reason to assume that they were free to come and go in any port of the world and to expect every courtesy from its people or officials.

Yet each of them knew as well as if a prohibitory sign had been set on Takashima in blazing electrics that their presence there, that evening, was at least embarrassing to Japanese officialdom—and they laughingly speculated as to what measures would be adopted to shorten their stay. In Kobe, Kyoto, Yokohama and Tokio they had standing invitations to spend weeks or months in the homes of Nippon's oldest Samurai families. But though half a dozen of their warmest friends lived in Nagasaki and Kagoshima, they had received no invitations to visit either port since 1914.

It must not be inferred that unpleasant restrictions are placed in the way of such tourists as seem bent upon seeing Kyushu, or of the various Oriental liners. The Japanese do nothing as crudely as that. They'll tell you with their usual smile that

Nagasaki is now a military base, which compels them to prohibit sketching or photographing within a thirty-mile radius, and that there is really little or nothing to see there, in its slowly decaying state. But if you insist upon coming, and don't mind being shunted from your immediate objective twenty times a day by perfectly courteous little gendarmes, why, they're quite willing to have you spend all your spare cash on tortoise-shell trinkets in Motokagomachi and move on to the next port in your itinerary. If you happen to have a streak of American stubbornness, you do insist upon seeing Nagasaki and staying there several days at least, for it is one of the loveliest spots on earth—by far the most beautiful in all Japan, with the old native life still unspoiled by modern progress.

THE Earl had been examining the Bund and the customhouse *katoba* for two or three moments through his binoculars. "Hmph! We must have been reported from Takashima as we passed! I rather expected a Government launch to run out before our mud-hook was fairly down. On second thought, though, I don't believe they'll play it that way. They'll figure that any appearance of haste might give the impression that they're not entirely pleased at our droppin' in—and just send out the usual health boat presently to give us pratique. We'll get some most correct official calls later in the evening—or possibly not until morning. Ah! There comes the medico now. See him running out of the canal behind Deshima?"

With the Japanese quarantine-flag at the stern, a small launch ran out to the yacht at a leisurely pace, and a neatly uniformed Japanese officer came up the accommodation-ladder. Upon being shown the *Ranée's* clean bill-of-health by the sailing-master, he made no request to see the owner, but stepped into the master's cabin for a glass of Scotch and a cigar. When leaving, he casually asked:

"Honorable Earl and those party are be vaccinate? Yaes?"

"Oh, without doubt! Though I can't say how recently, you know. Why? Have you much smallpox ashore?"

"He are not epidemic, as yet—perhaps. *Prevalen'*, I theenk are mos' propaire word. Yaes. But our bubonic thees week—he are quite so bad. Those rat, he are not propaire killed; he run through native

quarter—give much people the bubo—make hospital too much full, I theenk. Yaes. But European not usually get—if very strong in condition. Well—mus' go. Goo'-by!"

These few remarks were at once reported to Earl Trevor when the launch had disappeared, as the medico knew they would be—but without altogether the anticipated effect. There was little said until he and Sir Abdool went below for dinner; his Hongkong guests were rather apprehensive, but Countess Nan laughed them out of it.

"Just consider! We had a radiogram from Jimmy Lewis, in the British consulate, yesterday. If smallpox and plague had been prevalent here, he would have inserted the naval code-word of warning, according to his instructions from Downing Street. He said he'd be glad to see us—which meant that there was no danger that he knew of. For all that, however, it is not impossible that we might be deliberately exposed to a few cases. They'd most profoundly regret such an occurrence to visitors of our standing, but would make it also clear that we had been definitely warned. However, we're likely to see Jimmy in a few hours—and possibly another old friend as well. Hsst! There go the screws!"

The deck under them shuddered for a moment from the racing turbines which had been started full-speed ahead and then reversed, in the engine-room.

"Why? What does that mean? Are we leaving again—now?"

"Oh, not at all! That's just Angus McPherson's warning that a suspicious craft, or swimmer, is close aboard of us, and that we mustn't discuss anything we don't wish overheard. We keep a very strict deck-watch in every port, you know."

THE married couple and extra girl from Hongkong had been more or less associated with the British diplomatic service for six years before they became members of Sir Francis' circle at Government House in Hongkong—having come in from the Intelligence Department of the Army; so they were quicker than average English people would have been to take the hint and introduce no subject of conversation which might convey a political meaning. But they were amazed at the smooth precision of the Earl's arrangements for guarding the yacht against all contingencies which might arise.

Going up to their deck-chairs again after dinner, they caught the briefest of inquiring looks between Trevor and one of his quartermasters—the man pointing with two fingers (in a motion so rapid that it could be scarcely followed) to the space under the yacht's counter, over the screws, and with another motion like sweeping, with both hands, indicating that some light craft had been paddled close against the starboard side and was at that moment within a few feet of them. Bending over to tighten one of her shoe-laces, Countess Nan breathed a whisper into the ear of Captain Massingham's wife who occupied the next chair:

"Follow any conversational lead that Trevor may start—as if we'd nothing else on our minds."

At the same moment, His Lordship comfortably stretched his legs and arms, after lighting one of his long brown cigars: "Gad! I think we picked the right spot to recuperate—eh? Always been fond of this jolly old harbor, don't you know—an' we've good friends over you, above Sagari-matsu—quite ideal houses, with magnificent views. We must go ashore in the morning an' call upon them. Don't know whether there really was fever along those Chinese canals or not,—mosquitoes weren't more than usually bad,—but I fancy we all grubbed a bit too much on the bally book! Dev'lish int'restin' work, d'ye see, when one fairly plunges into it—diggin' up old legends, huntin' out the really historic spots which count, gettin' at ethnological differences in folk of the various provinces."

"How did Your Lordship happen to start anything like writing such a book? Seems a bit odd for a rear admiral and famous aviator to switch off upon a book of travel through China, with no reference to his wonderful experiences in the German War."

"Aye—but that's just the point, d'ye see? It's because all three of us wish to put the whole bally mess clear out of our minds, occupy ourselves with something which doesn't even suggest war! If we couldn't manage to get it out of our thoughts, we'd go insane! The thing was too stupendous, too paralyzing to every decent human faculty! So—we're tryin' to get away from it all."

"Shall you include Japan as well?"

"That has been our intention—also Indo-China, Siam an' the Dutch Indies. But, of course, that will depend upon a lot



of things. Our business affairs may call us back to London any time—though we hope at least to finish the China book first.”

“You’re planning further tours in China, then?”

“Oh, aye! We’re no more than half through, as yet. As soon as we’re feelin’ quite fit again, we’ll be goin’ back up the Yangtse on the *Ranée*—as far as her draught will let her go. Then we’ll make a number of trips through those wonderful gorges in a smaller craft, an’ up into the mountains. I fancy a week or more in this place will put us right again; we’d thought of askin’ our Japanese friends about the facilities for makin’ an equally exhaustive study of these Islands an’ Formosa, so as to lose no time when we’re quite done with China, don’t you know. What? I say! That sounds like a launch comin’ off to us! There’s no other craft lyin’ within five hundred yards.”

IN a few moments a white launch could be faintly seen approaching the accommodation-ladder; then, a well set-up man in the thirties stepped upon the deck with a nod of recognition to the sailing-master, who stood at the gangway. As he walked aft with him, the master whispered, close to his ear:

“Three of the Japs somewhere alongside of us in the water, sir—they’ll be hearing most anything said!”

Although the consular service is strictly commercial and has nothing to do with the diplomatic, its members get a good deal of political training. They must be ingratiating with every sort of people, from British shipmasters to nationals of various countries. They must be—efficiently to carry on their Government’s affairs—on excellent terms with officialdom in the country to which they are accredited. They must learn to smile—and keep their mouths shut—in twenty different languages. So the hint to Vice-Consul James Frobisher Lewis was quite sufficient. Joining the party on the after-deck with the hearty greetings of an old friend, he chatted with them for upwards of three hours upon social affairs, the literary work with which they were occupying themselves, without the slightest reference to political affairs, other than the strikes in England and the Irish troubles, which anyone may and does talk of, these days. At midnight he accepted the offer of a state-room and went below with them.

At half-past three in the morning two half-numbered swimmers and a paddler in a tiny *sampan* silently made their way to the shore on the west side of the harbor and hurried to the headquarters of the commander of fortresses at Hiratoyago, beyond the Mitsubishi dockyard. Here they were taken through a tunnel in the rock at the back of the fortifications to an inner chamber where the commander himself was smoking and chatting at a map-covered table with two keen-eyed, middle-aged Nipponese in European clothes whom anyone familiar with Oriental types would have guessed to be statesmen of high standing. When each of the men had told his story and had been cross-questioned as to his own opinions, the three were dismissed. After the door was closed, one of the nobles summed up his personal conclusions.

“I’ve met the Earl and Countess frequently—studied their customary turn of mind, their tastes, what they are most interested in. Neither of them nor their Afghan friend is in the least a fool. Their knowledge of world-politics appears to be that of the average intelligent Englishman or American who reads the daily papers and forms a personal opinion from what appears in print; but although both of the Trevors did some very spectacular flying during the war and carried military dispatches, they seem to have no taste whatever for diplomatic intrigue. It is against the nature of their type. Now, our agents have watched them all along their tour of China. They’ve met hundreds of Chinese officials and prominent men, but only such as their own social position would entitle them to meet—such as tourists of their rank would be quite sure to see in the various canal and river-towns. In no single case was there any indication of secret conferences or of political discussions beyond inquiries as to how the republic was working out. If they are anything but what they have always seemed to at least a dozen of us, they are the most consummate actors in the world!”

“I quite agree with Honorable Marquis as to that. But none the less we cannot have them tramping about, going where they please, in any of our restricted zones. They are far too intelligent! If we cannot scare them away, there are doubtless other methods by which their stay may be shortened—”

“And so arouse very natural suspicions

that we have something of the utmost importance to conceal from other governments? When we permit their business-houses and steamship-agents to remain in their buildings on the Bund and carry on their daily affairs with no suggestion that we wish to get rid of them?"

"But those people are restricted to the commercial and foreign quarters—the hill-temples below a certain line. We do not permit them to go beyond the limits we have fixed."

"True; but those regulations have been in force so long that foreign residents here are now unconscious of them—never think of going on forbidden ground. With the Earl and Countess, I believe there will be little inclination to do more than visit the houses of old friends on the hills, make purchases in the shops, run about the harbor in their launch, perhaps, without inspecting the shores too closely. I do not say they should be permitted to do so without being under fairly close espionage; but there must be no bungling! They must not be aware of it! My judgment would be that those of us who know them should go aboard their yacht before noon in a purely social way, conveying the impression that they are entirely free to go about as they please, but bearing in mind that the Emperor does not permit photographing or sketching in any of the military zones. Our secret police will inform us if they attempt to abuse their privileges. We will be fairly certain before they leave as to whether they're what we suppose—or something more dangerous."

IN the morning the air was still mild enough for breakfast to be served on the afterdeck of the *Ranée*, under the awning. Two of the crew were busy under the yacht's counter with long-handled brushes, on a painters' raft; and others were slung over the side in bo's'n's chairs, forward, touching up spots where the immaculate white of the hull had been slightly marred by fenders or débris on the water. As His Lordship and Jimmy Lewis sat down to their grapefruit before the ladies appeared, the sailing-master came aft with a low-voiced report:

"There are none o' them within hearing distance, sir—we've combed her down to the bunkers and ballast-tanks. There's not a hole where anyone could be concealed. We've had spy-drill so often, sir, that we make a clean job of it in a few

minutes—but this time, we searched her twice. An' nothing can get alongside without one of the painters hailing the deck."

"Very good! Then I fancy there'll be at least an hour or so without interruption. Thanks! —Now, then, Jimmy—there's a bit of information I'm at liberty to give you—on His Majesty's service. We're cruisin' partly for rest an' recreation, you know—just as we seem to be. But I happen to be detailed by the Admiralty on a special mission as well—carryin' dispatches, placin' 'em in the hands of certain people all over the place; sealed instructions, you understand! I know nothin' of what's in 'em except in a general way, so as to act intelligently if they have anything particular to communicate. To be sure, if you've any information which should be in the hands of the F. O. yet is too dangerous to send in cipher, I've authority to get it from you an' carry it back to London in my head. For example, what do you know of the fortifications an' other things the Japs are up to in this zone?"

"Not a hundredth part of what I'd like to know! But I can give you something. I've the finest telescopic prism-binocular there is within a hundred miles of this port, and am living on the hill over yonder where I get all the view there is. Here's a topographic map of the harbor, city and surrounding hills. They'll not be able to see under this awning with a telescope, I fancy! Now, the crest of this hill, and this one, is honeycombed, I believe, with battery galleries in which are heavy guns ranging twenty or twenty-five miles. And the galleries are deep enough in the rock so that none of our naval shells would penetrate that far. Lucky shots might disable two or three guns, but any attacking force would be put out of action unless the places were stormed from the rear, which would be almost an impossibility.

"As far as the Mitsubishi dockyards are concerned, I've been taken through them by Jap officials—they make no secret of the shipbuilding going on there. But I'm almost positive that there is another plant half a mile back of the Akonoura yard,—up that creek, in a little valley which you can't see from the harbor,—where they are building small naval craft by the hundred, also mines and munitions. I had it pretty straight that the creek has been dredged to a thirty-foot depth at least that far. Besides these points, I'm convinced



that the whole bottom of the harbor and every approach to it within ten miles is planted with a network of electric cables—and mines, in certain nests, which control every channel. The Japs know where they can anchor in safety; there is a specified anchorage for every foreign vessel."

"H-m-m! Seems to me that their milit'ry activities have been so well hidden that no ord'n'ry kodaking tourist would be able to get anything of importance with a camera! Ten years ago one could buy photographs of the harbor and streets at a number of shops back of the Bund or along the Motokagomachi, but I understand that nothing of the sort is obtainable today. Seems overcautious—what?"

"No, I'm inclined to fancy they know exactly what they're about. If one had a five-by-seven camera with a three-hundred-dollar telephoto anastigmat lens and got pictures taking in the whole sweep of these hills, with needle-point definition, you might not see very much on the contact-print—but a twenty-by-twenty-eight enlargement would show things on the rocky outcrops of those hills—clearings and structures on the slopes of the more distant valleys—which would enable an enemy bombing-plane nearly to paralyze a number of their military and naval plants hereabout.

"Also I fancy they're systematically preparing this place a good many years ahead for possible contingencies in which they would close the port to all outsiders, and within a week convert it into one of the most powerful naval bases in the world. Of course, Sasebo and the Gulf of Omura form presumably the strongest and most extensive naval base they've got. Tourists are not encouraged to stop off the trains anywhere around the Gulf—if they do so, they get no chance to see anything the Japs wish to conceal. I've thought a number of times that if I could pass successfully as a German, I could learn a good bit about Sasebo and that Gulf. They're both parts of the Nagasaki base."

"Eh? An' why so—if one might ask?"

"Because I'm positive they're employing German milit'ry experts to advise them upon fortifications, ordnance and ship-building. There's one chap I've had my eye on, here, who goes over to Sasebo when he likes and has been all through the hills back of the Mitsubishi yards with various Jap officers. He's Prussian, unquestionably—engineer, presumably. Tall, well-

set-up chap you'd know for a milit'ry man in mufti, anywhere. Wears a monocle—twists up the ends of his mustache à la kaiser. Goes by the name Von Ehrling. I've met him occasionally in the Nagasaki Club on the Bund, an' oddly enough, he seemed rather disposed to cultivate my acquaintance."

"I say! Were you advised by the F. O. that one of their cleverest men happens to be in this port just now—in disguise? I was told of it in Downing Street just before we sailed. Case like this is always a toss-up whether the chap gets out of the country alive with what he's managed to pick up! I've a strong impression, Jimmy, that your Von Ehrling may be our own man. You'd best hold yourself in readiness to assist him upon the merest hint at any moment, an' get him under the Union Jack at the Consulate without delay. But be jolly well sure you don't talk politics unless you know. He may have a silver greyhound about him, an' he may not—but you know the F. O. grip an' the local code-word."

WHILE the vice-consul is being taken ashore in the *Ranée's* launch and the Trevors are entertaining three prominent Nipponese statesmen aboard, let us consider the Prussian, Von Ehrling—who for two weeks had been a guest of Baron Akogi in one of the most beautiful Japanese residences on the hills, while visiting numerous military and naval plants in the Nagasaki district as an expert in such matters. How many times in those two weeks he narrowly missed betraying his merely superficial knowledge of the points under discussion, none but the man himself will ever know. Long years of experience in diplomatic intrigue had brought him in contact so many times with military and naval experts that his own engineering studies, while training to pass army-exams had formed a basis upon which it was not difficult to build with such added information until he was able to reel off technical terms and fairly sound ideas of construction with little effort. But coming to Japan in an advisory capacity to some of the best engineers in the world was a vastly different matter. He was obliged to consider every word he said, every question asked him, during a matter of one or two seconds. Deliberation was in his favor—lent more weight to what he said. Hesitation—was dangerous in the

extreme. And the line between the two is very thin.

As far as Von Ehrling was able to judge, he hadn't made a single slip—sheer fool's luck, as he put it to himself; and he was preparing to leave for Shanghai on a C. P. R. liner that was making an unscheduled stop at Nagasaki to leave a consignment of American machinery. As he had come out of Siberia with the reputation of having served through the war in more or less direct association with the German war-council, and was obviously in Japan to recuperate, he readily accepted the suggestion that he inspect some of the naval and military bases, upon the understanding that it should be without remuneration, as a matter of professional courtesy. Which naturally resulted in his receiving the Imperial Order of the Rising Sun before he left for a further inspection of certain enterprises in China—and three ceremonial dinners in his honor.

As the Canadian liner's stay in port was a matter of but a few hours, he went aboard of her with his luggage shortly after she dropped anchor and took possession of the stateroom which he had reserved by telegram to Yokohama—finding to his surprise and pleasure an old university friend in the adjoining room on the next gangway, just the other side of his bulkhead. As might have been expected, several of his Japanese friends came aboard to see him off, but after entertaining them for an hour in a private banqueting-room, he excused himself upon the plea of having a splitting headache. Said he had better have the ship's doctor prescribe for him and lie down in his stateroom until the ship was at sea if he expected to stave off a bilious attack. This was entirely reasonable. With polite expressions of sympathy, they said good-by, saw him go along one of the main gangways to his room, and went ashore in their launch.

THE room Von Ehrling had reserved was one with a bath adjoining—which also might be taken with the stateroom on the next side-gangway in case he hadn't cared to pay the extra price—doors opening into both rooms. As soon as Von Ehrling's gangway door was closed, he went through the bath to the other room, locking both doors against possible intrusion. Apparently his German friend had a roommate for the voyage—several pieces of

luggage marked F. L., London, being stowed under the lower berth and transom.

Opening the largest of these, he took out a complete change of clothes so entirely different in cut and pattern as to be almost a disguise in themselves—also a pair of heavy shoes with concealed thicknesses in sole and heel which added a good inch to his apparent height. After shaving off the upturned blond moustache, he filled the wash-basin with warm water to which he added a few drops from a bottle, then rinsed and soaked his hair repeatedly until the blond dye had entirely disappeared, revealing his natural hair as iron-gray—in some lights almost white.

When his preparations were complete, Von Ehrling pushed the button for his room-steward, who appeared in a couple of minutes. Had he been cross-examined on a witness-stand, the steward might have been morally certain that he had never laid eyes upon this passenger in Room 112 until that moment. But the man's face really was familiar—they had made a previous voyage together on another boat. He called him by name. Those pieces of luggage had certainly been stowed at Yokohama. So without stopping to give the question a thought, Jenkins shouldered the portmanteaus and took them out on deck to the accommodation-ladder as directed—the passenger following close at his heels. Apparently his arrival on the Canadian Liner had been expected, for one of the *Ranée's* boats lay at the foot of the ladder, and the coxwain touched his cap with a pleased smile as he stepped aboard. Just as they were shoving off, the passenger shook hands with Jenkins, who had stepped back on to the ladder-grating after stowing the luggage, and thanked him for his attentions during the voyage. In the steward's hand, as he went up the accommodation-ladder, was a crumpled twenty-pound note.

Ten minutes later the mysterious traveler stepped upon the *Ranée's* deck and went aft to where Earl Trevor and two of the ladies were sitting under the awning. Their greeting was pleasantly casual, as if his joining them in Nagasaki had been expected—quite a matter of course; but there was something a good deal more in the way they gripped his hands, and in the Earl's muttered:

"Gad, Lammy—you did pull it off! An' they'll never recognize you in a thousand



years! The *Empress*'ll be gone in three hours; Tom Bartlett will answer in your assumed name if there's any inquiry by radio before she hits Shanghai. We'll stick around here for two or three days more, takin' you ashore as one of our party—then pull out around eight bells in the afternoon, so it'll be sunset by the time we're outside Takashima. There are none of them within hearing just now, but there may be at any moment—we'll get the usual warning from the screws. My word! This will be a great relief to Nan when she comes aboard! We assumed, of course, that you'd make it—but it was little better than the hundredth chance, you know!"

AT this point, some explanation may clear up the mystery of Baron Lammerford's sudden materialization and the arrangements which made it possible. In Yokohama, Captain Rathbun of the *Empress* had been handed certain orders from the Admiralty by an attaché of the British Embassy at Tokio, who had brought Lammerford's luggage aboard. Being a lieutenant in the Reserve, Rathbun had naturally carried them out to the letter—much pleased to have a hand in something which he by no means understood but inferred must be decidedly big and serious. He understood that his supposed passenger was quite possibly a British King's Messenger—and that an impression must be created aboard not only that Lammerford had actually sailed with him from Yokohama, but also that the pseudo-German, Von Ehrling, actually occupied the room on the other gangway as far as Shanghai. Jenkins—a former Navy quartermaster with five enlistments to his credit—was absolutely reliable for such work; so he was transferred to that gangway from the B-deck. The doctor, being also a R. N. man, was ready to swear that Lammerford had been on board and that Von Ehrling was under his care for two days out from Nagasaki. None of the three knew more than these bare facts—which they were ordered to remember and swear to if afterward questioned. Neither knew more than his own personal instructions. Something big was afoot—they were assisting with their eyes and mouths shut. That was all. And in the matter of remuneration, they had no reason to complain—what they got seemed a good deal for what they did.

When a man has been systematically absorbing some of the most carefully guarded secrets of such a nation as Japan, it takes a very unusual quality of nerve to remain for several days longer in the same locality after having changed his appearance. There is always the chance of betraying himself by some careless natural gesture, inflection of the voice or manner of walking. Beyond all that is the risk of accident or sudden death before he has safely conveyed his dangerously acquired information to his own Government. On the other hand, if he is sure of himself and his changed appearance, there is nothing quite so likely to dispel suspicion as such a course.

As Francis Lammerford, Baron of St. Ives, he was known to nearly every prominent statesman in the Mikado's empire—known to have been connected with Downing Street many years before and, next to Sir Abdool, the Trevors' most intimate friend. Had he come to Nagasaki by himself, some ulterior object might have been suspected, but joining the Earl's party aboard the *Ranée Sylvia*, going about with them ashore, merely to the houses of old friends or in quarters frequented by every tourist—this was so obviously an innocent proceeding that none of the Government officials gave it a second thought. At the end of the week, after a farewell dinner on board to their Japanese friends, the yacht weighed anchor and steamed out past the lovely islands beyond the harbor entrance, floating apparently in a translucent sea of violet ether.

At noon that day, when sure that no spies were in their immediate neighborhood, the Earl had had a brief talk with his sailing-master in the wheel-house.

"Considering the deal of important matters we have to go over, connected with the Admiralty, we thought first of havin' the usual spy-drill before leavin' port, but there are quite strong objections to that in this case. First place, it lets the Japs know we're a good bit more on our guard than we seem to be, an' that implies that there may be something we're not keen to have 'em find out. Can't afford that, d'ye see! Very good! Next thing—how to confirm the impression that we've nothing at all to conceal? Eh? Well, it's quite on the cards that they'll put a spy or two aboard of us with orders to go as far as the Chinese coast if they can do so without discovery. So we've decided to

make Shanghai first, before proceedin' to Hongkong—an' give any secret agents who may be aboard of us all the chance they wish to overhear what we say or discuss. You'll pass the word among the crew to keep a guard on their tongues and arrange all the opportunity you can think of to let them get aboard—I fancy they'll be on one of the water or vegetable *sampans* which bring off our supplies, an' will be chaps who speak English sufficiently well to pass as some of our own crew—may even smuggle aboard a couple of R. N. R. uniforms. At all events, you quite understand what's to be done. Don't overplay the game by appearin' too careless! If you see anybody doing something which looks queer at night, you'll challenge him, of course. But if he's at all ready with a plausible explanation, you'll just let it go at that—cautioning the chap that it's not allowed on board. Eh?"

PROBABLY if any one trait is to be credited for the brilliant successes of the Free Lances through a long series of perilous years, it is the quality—which they possess to so marked a degree—of being able to visualize in advance the probable trains of thought in their adversaries' minds, and guard against future contingencies before they happen. Because of the work they had been doing in China, it was essential that their stay in Nagasaki should be demonstrated a purely recuperative, one with no political object—and with Lammerford on board, it was of even greater importance that the statesmen in Tokio should have proof that nothing but social and personal affairs were discussed at sea after the yacht was safely out of Japanese waters—if those statesmen happened to be so accommodating as to attempt such espionage. As Trevor afterward expressed it, the odds were three to one that they'd do so. And the *Ranée* was just leaving Takashima astern when the sailing-master whispered to His Lordship that two Japs were concealed under tarpaulins behind some oil-casks in the lazaret, presumably with a supply of food.

As the crew were all picked men, tried and proved a hundred times, the only chance of mishap on the short run to Shanghai lay with the guests from Hongkong. But without in the least comprehending what had been happening, or how their lovely days of rambling about the famous home of *Chrysanthème* could have

any significance beyond obvious shopping and sight-seeing, they knew that people of the Trevors' prominence wouldn't be at such pains to caution them unless something was in the wind—and they played the game clear into the Woosung without tripping once.

When the party went ashore to dine with friends on Bubbling Well Road, the yacht was overhauled so thoroughly after her sea-run—apparently a regular occurrence, Navy fashion—that the two Nipponese saw discovery inevitable if they remained aboard any longer, and dropped overboard into the river the moment they could do so unobserved. When the yacht slipped downstream into the Yangtse and out upon the Yellow Sea, the only living creatures aboard were her owner's party, her crew, her three cats and a few rats. The sailing-master would have staked his life upon it. As for the two spies, they were back in Nagasaki on a T. K. K. boat five days later with a report which seemed to prove everyone aboard the yacht above suspicion—and the impression was mysteriously conveyed to Japanese agents throughout the Chinese Empire that they need waste little time in shadowing the Earl of Dyvnaint's party unless some reported action of theirs seemed to warrant investigation.

AS soon as the yacht was safely out of Shanghai, Lammerford set to work upon the chart-desk in the luxuriously-fitted stateroom always reserved for him—laying out a set of topographical and engineering drawings, the measurements for which he had managed to pace off and store in his memory by a rather wonderful system he had worked out for just such contingencies. The bulkheads enclosing the room, like those occupied by the Earl, Countess Nan and Sir Abdool, had been sound-proofed until it was impossible for conversation in them to be overheard unless the ports were open and somebody happened to be standing on the deck directly overhead. So, as Lammerford worked, he gave his two friends bits of what he had picked up.

"Even though I was down there officially in an advisory capacity, they'd no intention of letting me get much more than any other foreigner; but keeping in mind the excellent maps we already have at the F. O., I knew exactly where to look for things they fancied I wouldn't see. For



example, while we were inspecting one of the ridges opposite Sasebo as a possible location for heavy gun-emplacements, I got a glimpse of a little hidden cove in the Gulf of Omura where fifty or more small craft were packed, side by side. Without using a glass I couldn't swear they were not destroyers, but I am fairly positive that they were a new type of submarine with a wide cruising radius. And they appear to have gone in for big hydroplanes to an extent that would surprise you. They didn't take me anywhere near the practice-grounds, but asked my professional opinion on blue-prints of German planes with certain alterations which they thought would give them wider cruising radius per gallon."

"Did you hear that American and European liners have been requested to omit Nagasaki from their schedules?"

"No. If you'll think a bit, you'll see it's quite unnecessary for them to do anything as crude as that. Steamers aren't run purely for the pleasure of sailing on the high seas, you know. They go where cargoes and passengers are to be had. If their own boats of the N. Y. K., T. K. K. and O. S. K. get all the passengers and cargo to or from that port, what object is there for other liners to call? Nagasaki and Kagoshima retain, today, more of the old Japanese life than any other ports in the Empire. The absence of the Navy fleets which formerly rendezvoused there makes the statement that they are falling into decay as maritime ports entirely plausible. All the Imperial Railways propaganda to attract foreign tourists is devoted to the middle and northerly islands—Kyushu is scarcely even mentioned. But the maps show at a glance that the Nagasaki zone is the ideal military base for offensives against Korea, Shantung, the Chinese Treaty ports or the Philippines and Indo-China. The amount of preparation there for anything of the sort, today, is not apparent to the casual observer—until he gets back among the hills. But I've little doubt that there are immense stores of coal, metals and other raw material in addition to a number of fully equipped plants. Of course, there's no law prohibiting Japan from developing such a base if she considers it advisable for her own defense. When it is far more formidable than any such need would indicate, however, it becomes a matter of serious interest to other governments."

"The United States, for example?"

"Not more than England or France. The elder statesmen of Japan are anything but crazy. They've no intention of declaring war against the United States unless they consider themselves forced to it by American interference with their control of China—that is, not before they have organized an army of ten million men with Japanese officers and are operating a number of Chinese mines and farm-areas. But if they decide at any time to make such a move, they'll land half a million men in the Philippines within three days, and have a strong enough naval force off shore to keep them there in spite of anything the United States can do without a year's preparation! The Japs aren't wasting powder and men foolishly—as attacking the American coast would be. They're out for territory. They know they can take the Philippines if they care to spend two or three billion yen defending them. They've got the ships to transport half a million before a Yankee fleet crosses the Pacific. They've coal and munitions. They could sink a lot of U. S. transports before they got across. But if they're not interfered with in China, that dream of centuries is so much bigger, so much more to their advantage, that they'll waste no time on the Philippines."

"Unless—the United States hands them over to the Filipinos."

"Oh—that! Of course! Japan would probably take possession within the week. . . . By the way, I've had altogether too much in mind to follow your movements in China, but I fancy you've been getting a bit of action there without showing your hand."

"Why so? What gave you the impression?"

"Well, I picked up a rumor in official circles that Tokio has about decided to end the military agreement with the *tuchans* of North China and withdraw her troops from the Siberian border. It was supposed to expire automatically when the bolshevik menace was removed, but they've managed to keep a good-sized force there upon one pretext or another and loan the *Tuchans* a lot of money for their own troops until most of them are in the power of Tokio through their financial obligations. Now, they make a fine gesture to convince the outside world that their intentions are strictly honorable. Personally, I think you may have started some-

thing, though I've not the least idea how you managed it, and think they mean to lie low until they've had time to study it out. You intend making another houseboat tour of the Yangtse and the canals, as I understand it—gathering up further material for your book on China? What? But, of course, you mean to confer with certain men at various points if it can be done without getting caught at it. Who are they?"

"The one I mean goin' after at the start—indirectly—is Wang Chi-li, the *tuchan* or military governor of Kwang Si. Having become a multi-millionaire,—by the usual methods, I suppose,—he's now the nearest approach to an altruist of any *tuchan* in China. That is, unlike most of the others, he seems to know when he has got enough, more than he can spend during his lifetime, and is willing to exert all his personal effort, disinterestedly, to bring about stabilized central government. He knows his fellow-countrymen, knows they are not yet ready for constitutional democracy, through lack of national cohesion—an' is an autocrat in his own province. His local army is the best organized and equipped of any south of Manchuria—good enough to seize an' hold the five neighboring provinces if he wanted to.

"Li Sung-fu, in London, made a special point of my getting in touch with Wang Chi-li as soon as possible, but warned me it would be a matter of months before I could do so in the right way. I might have called upon him at once after gettin' out here, but after many courtesies an' a lot of meaningless entertainment, I'd have been precisely where I started. It's not Wang's policy either to discuss or go into anything whatsoever until he has laid low for a good bit watching somebody else take the first steps. We thought when we had that interview with our mysterious caller, one rainy night up in the hill-country, that we'd gotten hold of the most influential member of the supreme association which controls the *tongs*. In a way, he was very nearly that—an' started things moving as you heard up yon in Japan.

"But as near as I can figure it out, Wang Chi-li now controls the supreme association by sheer force of cold, calculating brain-power—the same qualities possessed by Chang Tso-lin in Manchuria, but developed to even a higher degree. Either of those two men could govern China suc-

cessfully, as president or as premier for Emperor Hsüan Tung—but there's little chance that one would subordinate himself to the other. Wang, however, has now reached the point where he's willing to confer with me—cards on the table—and has permitted the fact to reach me through sources which I don't believe Japan even guesses, or anyone else in China."

AS upon their previous visit, the yacht ran up the river to Canton, where the same luxurious houseboat with a petrol-motor, in which they had made the earlier tour, lay waiting for them against the stone embankment of the Shameen. Going aboard of her at once, they sent the *Ranée Sylvia* down to Hongkong with their guests of the governor's staff—who permitted it to be understood throughout the port that it was the intention of the Earl and Countess to make less exhaustive trips into the interior this time, in gathering material for their literary work, and return to Hongkong or Shanghai for a rest after exploring each district.

The Occidental who proceeds up any of the Chinese rivers on business or pleasure is reminded of the Book of Genesis—for one stretch of any particular stream "begets" another farther down, of an entirely different name. The Earl's houseboat, for example, ran up the broad Si-kiang from the Canton River just below the city. In thirty-six hours the same stream became the somewhat narrower Long Kiang, and two days later that, in turn, became the Hong Kiang, running up into the foothills. Just east of the narrow break in them where the river cuts through is the little town of Nati—not far from which, on a spur of the hills impregnable against any attack save that from naval guns or bombing-planes, is the wall-inclosed country residence which Wang Chi-li has built for himself as a sort of feudal headquarters. There is no railroad within five hundred miles of it, but in a little canal which he has constructed from the river to the base of the rock upon which his fortified houses stand, there are three light-draft power-yachts which can and do make the run down to Canton in something less than two days. Besides these he has a number of river-craft with auxiliary-motors which carry supplies of every description all through the province.

The houseboat purchased by the Earl and Countess—as described in a previous



narrative—was, though luxuriously furnished inside, no whit different in its external appearance from thousands of other similar craft which ply the Chinese rivers and canals. The only people usually visible upon her decks or the top of her bamboo-covered cabins were the ordinary Chinese family crew seen upon every other similar boat. So if the four Europeans and their personal attendants chose to remain below along any particular stretch of river, or while passing through any of the towns, it would have required actual search of every such boat in sight to locate them—which explains how they dropped so completely out of sight as far as anything their friends in the treaty ports were able to learn.

In the absence of railways and telegraph-lines, word of their being entertained by this or that *tuchan* or mandarin took weeks to reach the coast. Through their own mysterious system of communication it is probable that many of the educated Chinese knew approximately where they were, and Japanese agents reported them from various towns, only to lose track of them completely as soon as night settled down. For the Chinese saw to it that no "chrysanthemum brother" got the chance to watch the boat after dark. After getting up into the Hong Kiang, there was scarcely one Nipponese to the square mile.

With a very thorough understanding of their ultimate intentions toward his country, Wang Chi-li had taken effective measures to clear most of them beyond a certain radius from his country home. When discussing political situations as delicate as those in Asia today, he wanted elbow-room—took drastic measures to get it. So when the Trevors and their two friends arrived at Nati, there was little need for secrecy in offering them his hospitality.

A DESCRIPTION of his various houses inside the hill-fortification would be of interest, but the reader's imagination must supply it for the present. With millions to spend in the indulgence of his fancies, plus Oriental love of the luxurious, one may go to great lengths in achieving sensuous comfort.

There was a dinner—in a glass-roofed, inclosed court, with fountain and tank in the center—such as one doesn't often eat even in Paris. After that, over the coffee and cigars, the polished Celestial began a discussion of existing conditions with

the utmost frankness and appreciation of his guests' motives.

"Today there is no government of the Chinese Republic. In Peking, Tuan Chi-jui is tolerated by the northern *tuchans* as a nominal president as long as he pays sufficient tribute for them to maintain their own private armies with public money. There is a parliament almost entirely made up of the Anfu Club's well-paid nominees. Tuan and the northern *tuchans* are so deeply in debt to Japan for loans to keep them going that all their actions are controlled by Tokio. There is even said to be a secret treaty by which Japan is furnishing two million yen a month for the organization of a Chinese army. We of the south have not forgotten the way Formosa was taken from us.

"We bitterly resent any sort of foreign domination, though we favor the proposed consortium by which the Entente nations loan us the necessary money for China's development and handle our finances, because that takes the revenues out of the hands of the greedy *tuchans* and applies them for the good of the whole country in a similar way to that by which our customs, postal and salt revenues are collected as security for our country's foreign debts. We do not favor the sort of government the students and missionaries would set up for us on Occidental lines, because our people will not be developed as a cohesive national mass for anything of the sort for years to come. In the Forbidden City the Emperor Hsüan Tung is maintained with the whole of his suite upon an allowance of four million dollars a year—and it is probable that if he were restored to power, it would stabilize the country more than any other course, as he is an exceedingly bright young fellow of fifteen, with an English tutor, and very much wishes to make an educational tour of the world, incognito, before a marriage is arranged for him. Whether he does so or not rests with the elder statesmen of Japan—which is one of our chief differences with the northern *tuchans*—too humiliating to be permitted. There is a peace conference at Shanghai where delegates from north and south are trying to adjust these differences, but as long as the *tuchans* consider their own interests before those of the country, there's little chance for agreement. What we need today, and need desperately, is another Porfirio Diaz—an intelligent, altruistic despot who will gov-

ern autocratically for the country's good. Chang Tso-lin, in Manchuria, is such a man—owns his own banks, farms and industries, though he was originally a bandit. Sometimes I'm tempted to believe that I might be another."

"How much Japanese penetration is there in China?"

"Much more than there should be. In that direction you strike one of our chief difficulties. Tokio knows our markets thoroughly and devotes much study to supplying them. We of the southern provinces dislike the Japanese, but we must have and use the articles of consumption with which they flood our markets at lower prices than we can make them. This gives them standing and power in every section of the country."

"Why not have a protective tariff which will enable your own people to compete—develop your industries with money obtained from the Entente?"

"That is one of the first steps—as soon as we can force the northern *tuchans* to join us, or as soon as another Diaz seizes the government. And the *tong* movement which you have started will assist very materially in arousing anti-Japanese action up north. Given impetus enough, it will cut the ground from under Tuan's feet. By such means it may be quite possible to arouse a popular demand for Chang Tso-lin as temporary dictator—or—possibly—even me."

"Would you support Chang, if there seemed to be a popular demand for him?"

"To the full extent of my ability and

power! If he would permit me to co-operate with him fully, I would rather see him dictator, or premier for the Emperor, than hold such a position myself!"

"Then why not have a secret conference with him and us to discuss the various possibilities? Could it be done with any real security from Japanese spies?"

"Yes—with the assistance of the supreme association and some of the local benevolent societies—*tongs*, as you understand them. I've been thinking of such a conference. If you four were included, it would give much stronger evidence of good faith. Suppose we fix upon a date when you will agree to be in Chifu harbor on your own yacht. Chang can run across from Port Arthur on one of his own fast junks. I will join you at some unexpected moment when I can do so unobserved. If your crew are alert, as I've heard, it will be impossible for any Tokio agent to get aboard—and I may run back to Hongkong with you for a few days."

NEXT evening, a Chinese houseboat floated down the Hong Kiang at the leisurely pace affected by such craft—with the usual men, women and children squatting upon the bamboo covering of her cabins—one of countless thousands just like it. Yet below in its luxurious after-cabin were four Occidentals who had dared to tamper with Asiatic destiny, whose lives would have been snuffed out inside of as many minutes had they been in the power of Nipponese who knew what they had been doing.

#### WRITERS AT THEIR BEST

THE writing people have been in specially good form lately.

Seldom have we received such living and interest-absorbing fiction as that which has come in during the last few months. As a result, you may count upon some delightful winter evenings with your Blue Book in the companionship of fiction-folk well worth knowing. H. Bedford-Jones, Frederick R. Bechdolt, Frank Condon, Maxwell Smith, Lemuel L. DeBra, William Almon Wolff, Paul Fitzgerald, F. Morton Howard, Robert J. Casey, Marshall Scull, Clarence Herbert New, George Allan England and many others have written their cleverest best for you: and you will find the forthcoming issues of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE more attractive than ever.



# Luck

**WHAT** does luck amount to, anyway? This thrilling drama of the South Seas raises an interesting question.



Alexander  
Hull

**Y**OU never know your luck. That's true; and you can't force it, either. Maybe you don't believe in luck. Some men don't; and others believe in only the one kind—bad luck. The real things—like finding a pearl, striking gold, falling in love with the one right woman—why, you might have a million-karat brain and put in a lifetime at any one of those pursuits, and what could attain them for you but luck?

It's an incomprehensible thing. If it has laws, we don't know them. It may be that the mere crossing of a road will miss it for you. You never know, and no amount of studying will tell you. I'm bound to say it makes life interesting, and since it plays a long game, it would be infinitely more interesting if we could live longer and see more of it.

Hardwick lived on one of the smaller islands of the Marquesas group. He was a big-boned, well-set-up chap of twenty-seven. He'd been there two years, and he'd gone there, as the fictionists so often say, "for the usual reason." A girl had sent him there. He had lived in the same little city with her, known her for years. They were to have been married in two weeks from the night he came unexpectedly into her garden and found her in the arms of an utter stranger to him, a man, as it turned out, already married. The man

wasn't kissing her; perhaps Hardwick might have endured that. She was kissing him—which, you perceive, makes all the difference in the world. Hardwick was in the right, of course, and yet the girl boldly faced him down, defied him, dared him to tell. She had too much spirit for Hardwick. He felt that it would be impossible to marry her, and equally impossible not to marry her, and yet go on facing her day after day. So he sneaked out of town overnight, leaving his job, his home, his future, as if he were a criminal fleeing from justice.

**I** DON'T know whether you know the South Sea Islands. They are the garden spots of the world—neither cold nor, if you strike the right ones, hot; and they're the apotheosis of the *dolce far niente*.

Take Hardwick's, for instance. Just at his back there was a mountain leaping sheer up to four thousand feet, yet not so sheer but that it was a riotous smother of gorgeous green jungle to the very summit. A hundred feet to the left ran a little stream of crystal limpidity. There was a garden-patch as rich as the fabulous vale of Avoca between the stream and the house—which stood on an old basalt *paepae* and faced the great sea, a vast, peacock-blue immensity that was never still and never the same, that played upon the strings of

the coral reef with tirelessly strumming fingers a noble melody that mingled with the higher notes of the trades in the trees and sang one into Nirvana.

That is, if one would let it!

It's the solemn truth that the tropics and the white man don't get on well together. It's a continual warfare between them. Sometimes the climate does for him, and sometimes it suits him too well. Either way, a man must be eternally on his guard if he wishes to retain his spirit and possess his soul and body in dignity and peace.

Hardwick knew that. He had read it; he had heard it said; he had seen it. And when he had been there two years, he began to be uneasy. He was beginning not to care whether he left or not. That was a bad symptom. He was afraid that presently, when the malady had taken him more completely, he would marry one of the graceful native girls and do for himself entirely, lose caste in his own eyes, as many a better man had done.

He had gone there to forget women and the world. And now he had forgotten them too well. That was the conclusion he came to one afternoon while he was out on the reef looking for the *hatuke*, the big sea-urchin that is so especially delicious, for some occult reason, in the last quarter of the moon. He decided to go to Hiva-Oa and see some white men. And he determined to take his few personal effects with him. It would be a toss-up, he felt, whether he ever returned to his island. A week later a schooner put in for copra, and Hardwick boarded her.

Five days later the same schooner, Tahiti-bound, put him off again. But there was a man with him now.

**H**IS name was Benjamin Drake.—at college, from which he had been summarily expelled, they called him "Bingo,"—and he was a plain rotter, just recovering from the D. Ts. in Atuona Valley. Hardwick believed, however, that if he had a white man to talk to, he could stand off the tropics quite a little longer. Just at present Bingo Drake was a very poor specimen of white man, but in his big frame there was promise of strength, and in his blond head a hint of intelligence.

Bingo was a very sick man for a few days. It was a fine thing to have some one to fuss over, and Hardwick fussed over him royally. In a fortnight Bingo

Drake was himself again—and effusively grateful. It was plain that he was the sentimental sort. He wrung Hardwick's hand again and again, and his somewhat fatuous blue eyes filled with ready tears. It was, he protested, the first time in three months he'd been treated by a white man like a human being. And he appreciated it so! He was stony, but put him to work, by Jove, let him pay his way! Coconuts to split for copra? Plant some lettuce? Go down and catch some *varo* on the beach? Give him a spool and some hooks—he'd catch 'em! Quicker than a native at it, he was!

And then he broke down again, and talked about his mother. The best mother in the world, as the formula runs. It might have palled upon you or me, but Hardwick had been alone too long. It was heaven to hear a man talking his language again. It didn't matter so much what he said. Hardwick was content just to lean back and open his ears and luxuriate in listening.

"I meant well all along," said Bingo Drake with a certain pathos. "But somehow I got started off wrong. There was money gone out of the till one day, and the other clerks, damn them, framed it on me. I hadn't done it. The old man gave me three days to make good. I couldn't do it. I couldn't borrow. Why, I owed money all over town as it was! Spent half my time dodging. I would have paid in time, though. I may be a fool, but I'm honest. But that cooked my goose, you see. Three days! Jail? No, no—not for yours truly. I skipped out in the night.

"Beat my way to the coast and then to Honolulu as a stoker. I had a good job there for a while, but I got in Dutch with the boss. He was an awful crab.

"Then I gambled my way to the Orient. I did well there—accumulated quite a stake. And then my partner robbed me and took French leave. I heard he'd gone to the Marquesas to start a plantation. I took a chance, got there, and stranded. Damn him, he wasn't there. It broke my spirit, Hardwick. I'd been there three months when you picked me up. In another I'd have kicked off, I swear!

"It was the whole game of life altogether, you know. I'd been getting lower and lower. Well, you see how it was. Everywhere I went I ran out of luck. Fired from college for a row I didn't start. Kicked out of my home town by a pack of



sneak-thieving clerks. Bounced from my job in Honolulu by a grouch. I turned gambler. I learned to drink like a fish—and I never did find out how to carry my drink like one. Then—robbed! I started out with the whole world before me, full of promise. And here I am. Just short of a beachcomber. And yet, by the Lord, I've got brains! I could beat the game yet, if I had half a chance!"

THE spark died out.

"Too late! Well, I've seen life, anyway. I'm twenty-nine now, and I've put in the last eight years seeing it. The things I've seen! No wonder my spirit's gone!"

"That's absurd," said Hardwick. "Wait till you've gotten rid of the hang-over. You'll do wonders yet."

"Think so? You're a good fellow—true blue, Hardwick!" said Bingo gratefully. "If I could think so! You know what I'd do? By heaven, I'd go back and see the dear old mother; that's what I'd do! And face the music—choke the truth out of those damned clerks' throats!"

"We lived in a little cottage on Maple Avenue. There was a stone dog in the yard, Hardwick. And a honeysuckle-vine over the porch. Mother used to sit out there—sewing."

And in the very midst of his pathos, he sat up suddenly.

"Hulloa!" he said. "Who's that down there on the stream?"

Hardwick looked. "Sweet Fern," he said. "A girl that lives up the valley a quarter of a mile."

"So-o?" said Bingo Drake. "Some kid, what?"

There was nothing definitely offensive in the tone; so Hardwick said shortly that she was.

When you fall into such hands as Hardwick's, you light on your feet, for sure. Though I risk sounding like an exotic nursery catalogue, almost within a stone's throw of the house there was food enough for a regiment, and fit for a king—mandarin oranges, lemons, mountain bananas, Guinea and Barbadoes cherries, cane, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cantaloupes, melons. There were a million salads of water-cress bordering the stream. There was bread-fruit and taro. The reef swarmed with gorgeous and delicious fish swimming in and out of the coral crevices in bursts of beautiful color. There were wild cattle and pigs on

the mountain. The more I consider the marvelousness of it, the more I wonder that men are willing to beat out their lives against the harsh, unyielding temperate zones, to fight in those crowded belts for place, for fame!

Bingo fitted in excellently. There were times of depression when he gloomed all over the place, but in the main he was a cheerful fellow. Hardwick and he weeded the garden, set out seed, went fishing a good deal, and hunting once or twice. Bingo was an open-faced creature. If he was glad, he sang; if he was sad, he let you know that too. But mostly he sang.

Hardwick took a remarkable pleasure in hearing his throaty baritone struggling with the hits of yesteryear. He didn't care for them much as music, but as an earnest of companionship they were fine. There was one old song in particular that Bingo sang with an effective emotionalism:

In the gloaming, oh my darling,  
Think not bitterly of me!  
Though I passed away in silence,  
Left you lonely, set you free.  
For my heart was crushed with longing;  
What had been could never be.  
It was best to leave you thus, dear,  
Best for you and best for me.

THEY were swimming in a pool of the stream one evening when Bingo, standing waist-deep in the caressing warmth of the water, brayed the melody for the tenth time that day.

"Great tune, great tune, old man," said Hardwick, grinning.

"Don't laugh," admonished Bingo Drake. "That means something to *me*, that tune does." A dreamy, sentimental look drifted over his features. "Her name was Ethel—Ethel Todd. She lived down the street two blocks from me. Lordy, she was a dear. Peaches and cream, you know. Blondy. Man, I tell you she was the sweetest thing that ever walked down Main Street! She was the only one I said good-by to, except the dear old mother. She hung round my neck and cried like her little heart would break. By Jove, she wanted me to take her with me! Can you beat it? But the girls always—"

"It couldn't be. I knew that. The kind of prospects I had before me! I promised to send for her just as soon as I got on my feet. Well, you know how *that* panned out. I expect she's waiting for me yet. Poor little girl. Little peaches and cream!"

Hardwick chivalrously restrained his impulse to burst into mad laughter. Knowing girls as Hardwick felt he knew them, it wasn't, to say the least, likely!

"Luck's been always against me," said Bingo mournfully. "I'm a fair gambler with cards; but there's one game I never could dope out, one player I never could savvy. That's life. When you sit in at that game, you're sitting in at a game where *you* can't mark the cards. And yet some fellows—Hulloa! What's that?"

A flash of golden bronze shot from the high bank thirty feet above them, and touched by the last gold of the setting sun, quite naked and unashamed, Sweet Fern struck the water in an irreproachable parabola, went beneath the surface, and came up grinning close by them.

"*Bon soir!*" she cried gayly.

"Why, how d'ye do, dearie-oh!" responded the volatile Bingo promptly. "Bet you a kiss I beat you to the other end of the pool!"

And then, as there was only one way to win, he took that way. He jumped out and ran along the sand. There was a brief laughing scuffle at the other end of the pool when he took his pay.

Hardwick stood watching them, thinking. . . .

For all his seediness, for all his rascality, for all his dissipation, Bingo Drake was younger than he, Hardwick, would ever be again. Something had gone out of him—the mainspring. His girl, Beth Langham, had done something to him that all Bingo's physical dabbling in iniquity would never do. Disillusionment! That struck home to Hardwick in a momentary flash of self-pity. That bronze girl could wake Bingo up, snatch ten years from him, make him a foolish boy again. And though she were ten thousand times as lovely, she couldn't light a spark in him, Hardwick.

THAT evening he said, over their cool strips of raw fish seared by lime-juice:

"Drake, if you're in earnest, if you mean you'd like to come back, I can give you a start, I think."

Drake stared at him.

"Do you?"

"Ah! *Do I?*" said Bingo with a sudden burst of passion. "*Do I?* Just try me, Hardwick!"

"Well," said Hardwick, "I've a few thousand francs laid away. There's copra. Vanilla, maybe, at a venture. But I

needn't go into detail yet. We can work that out later. It's been a godsend, having you here. I'm sick of the artificiality of life back among civilized people—"

"Aye, and me!" inserted Drake fervently.

"Nevertheless, I think I should have gone back, if it hadn't been for you. No white face—no one that speaks your language! At first you think that's precisely what you want; and then, after a while, you find it's not—it's only a hell of loneliness. You let down. You're done for. And then I happened on you. I owe you something. You understand? We'd be partners. Share and share alike."

"Fifty-fifty!" said Drake in soft incredulity.

"Yes," said Hardwick. "Why not? I think we should do well—from the very start. In two or three years, perhaps,—five, certainly,—you'd be able to go back. Long before that, probably, to send home money. And there would be—what was her name?"

"Ethel," whispered Bingo.

A faint cynicism touched Hardwick's mouth. "Yes, Ethel. For what I put in you can pay me in installments out of the profits. We're both young, both strong, both determined. I think we'd win. Why not?"

And forestalling any outbreak of gratitude, he added: "Shall we hurry through our food—and make out partnership papers?"

TWO months elapsed. Bingo Drake was very keen and earnest about the venture. They did a lot of work, and even more planning.

If there was one disturbing factor, it was the willful and attractive creature Sweet Fern. She wouldn't stay away. Hardwick she had now given up as unyielding. Bingo was more pliable clay. She flashed her little fascinations at him frankly and continuously.

Hardwick looked on doubtfully. At first a sheer streak of selfishness said to him: "Why not? He'll be the more contented to stay with you." And then another self reproached him: "What you wouldn't yourself, you'll allow Drake, whom you pretend to be helping?" And a third queried: "Ethel Todd? Had you thought of her? Is she to have her chance?"

He had a vague notion of going up to see Sweet Fern's father, old Blade-That-



Drinks-Deep—a great warrior in his time, and still reprobatably fond of dilating upon the days of unabating warfare and unrestrained consumption of long-pig, to anyone that would listen. But the old cannibal hadn't any influence with his quite modern young daughter, with her smattering of French and her wily ways, and Hardwick knew it.

One night Hardwick came in late off the reef and found Bingo gone. He was at once suspicious that Drake had fallen from grace. He'd heard of a kava-drinking that evening among the natives.

When he reached the place of it, however, the mischief was done. Drake as well as the natives had consumed his kava and topped it off with large portions of bread-fruit, taro and roast pig. Before Hardwick could get him fairly to his feet, he collapsed helplessly. It was too far to carry him, and Drake was a big man. Sweet Fern, a brilliant yellow with the cosmetic of the island girls,—*ena* paste and saffron,—paralyzed below the waist but still comparatively lucid of mind, was muttering and frowning him away. What should he do?

With an exclamation of disgust he ended indecision, let Drake sink to the floor of the *paepae*, and left him.

The next day Drake was home, sick and penitent, and full of protestations of future abstinence. Hardwick, however, would have overlooked far more than such a slight fall. He gave the best antidotes he could devise, suggested that Drake sleep it off that day, and asked amicably if they shouldn't go fishing tomorrow.

They went out at dawn and trailed mother-of-pearl spoons out of a canoe for albicore.

It was Drake who first spied the whaleboat perched on the bending summit of a jade-green swell. They gave over fishing at once and went at the oars.

THEY drifted close and Hardwick laid a hand on the gunwale. There were three men in the boat. One of them lay quite at the bow, huddled together in a grotesque attitude. A second lay sprawled across the seat halfway. By his right hand was a long knife, and in his throat was a terrible wound. The first man was a Chinaman, and the second a Malay.

The third man lay in the stern and was a white man. Upon his shirt-front of faded blue was a big dark stain a little

below the left breast. One hand was clasped about something depending from his neck.

The three men lay there, still and awful in the beating, intense tropical light, while the boats rose and fell languidly on the sleek swells of the lagoon.

"Dead," said Hardwick.

"Yes," said Drake, and then suddenly cried: "Look out!"

The man in the stern had slowly lifted himself on his elbow and stared at them through bloodshot and misty eyes.

"What!" he muttered with foggy incredulity. "More of you. . . . I thought you were—all—dead!"

With shaking hand he brought up a pistol and leveled it at Hardwick, who was nearest.

Drake expeditiously tipped the narrow canoe, and Hardwick pitched head foremost into the sea just as the pistol went off. He came up spluttering and climbed in.

"Better go slow," advised Drake.

But the man in the whaleboat had fired his last shot. When Hardwick ventured at length to step over the side, the fellow lay back, staring with glassy eyes into the blue bowl of the sky.

"Two against one," said Hardwick, piecing out the tragedy. "The man in the bows flung a knife and caught him in the breast. The Malay tried to close in and finish the job. But the little gun was too quick for them. He shot the Malay in the throat, and let the other have it in the forehead. And then he proceeded to bleed to death. Just that last effort finished his story."

"What was it all about, I wonder," said Drake.

"Hm!" said Hardwick. He stepped into the stern and bent over the white man. A canvas pouch hung about his neck on a string. Hardwick fingered it for a moment. Then he straightened up suddenly.

"Pearl!" he said. "Man's got a pearl here as big as a big hazelnut."

"No!" cried Drake excitedly.

"Has, though. And it's spoiled—dirty." Drake climbed over the side. "Let's see!"

They bent over the big pearl as it lay in the palm of Hardwick's hand, and a sense of terrible disappointment overwhelmed them. For the sheen, the silver-gray luster, was gone. A thing of exquisite beauty was marred, a beautiful intent frustrated.

It was a soiled thing. It might have been worth—since we must be materialistic with gems—thousands. It was worth—what?

"They say," said Drake in a taut voice that was scarcely more than a whisper, "that they can be skinned. And they come out perfect—sometimes."

"I've heard it," said Hardwick. "They're composed of semi-transparent layers, very thin. And if the stain hasn't gone too far—It takes skill, though."

He slipped it back in the canvas pouch and handed it to Drake. "Put it in your pocket—and be careful with it," he said. "Now let's get the whaleboat ashore."

They beached it on the sand below Hardwick's house. There was no sign of identification upon the dead men. Convinced of that at last, they buried the bodies and went up to the house.

ALL that day and evening they talked about the pearl. They went over all the information they had about pearls again and again. Drake remembered, after a long groping in the past, a name—Hugo Gevoort. That was the man—a great expert in pearls. Did Hardwick know that Gevoort had skinned that rose-pearl that had played such a notorious part in a certain European scandal?

Hardwick reminded him that he knew nothing of such affairs the last few years. And Drake told him with gusto.

They became more and more sanguine. The pellet of soiled gray nacre somehow bit into their blood and fired it.

Finally Hardwick agreed it should be Gevoort. Just as soon as they sold a crop, they'd risk it. They'd go to Batavia and find Gevoort: Share and share alike still, Hardwick? Oh, yes, that was perfectly understood between them. And what would you suppose, Hardwick, for the hundredth time, that it was worth? Why, remember, Drake, it might not—Aye, but it *would*! He had a hunch it would! Suppose his hunch were correct, what would you say?

They sat far into the night, drifting on a sea of golden speculations.

At length Drake said: "We'd better turn in. Where'll we put it?"

Hardwick went outside and located a certain stone in the wall of his *paepae* and in a moment's work with a knife removed it, disclosing a little cavity wherein there was a teakwood box.

"My safety-deposit vault," he said.

He took out the box, opened it and put the pearl in it. Drake saw that there was money in the box. He hadn't divined before where Hardwick kept his money.

"You're sure it's safe?" he queried uncertainly as Hardwick put things back.

"Perfectly," said Hardwick easily. "Nobody knows it but you and me."

They went into the house. For a moment they stood facing one another across the table. Suddenly Drake brought his fist down with a bang.

"By heaven," he cried exultantly, "my luck's changed! I can *feel* it! Ever since I came here I've had a hunch; now I *know*! Hardwick, this is the turning-point. We're going to win. We're going to be rich!"

"Sure," said Hardwick, smiling slowly. "I told you we would. Two determined men leagued together! That jade Misfortune can't keep them down."

Then he laughed ironically at their enthusiasm. After all, he reflected, it *was* fine for Drake. And it was for Drake he was glad. He was getting rather fond of Drake.

"Well," he remarked, "we'd better get to sleep."

"Happy dreams," said Drake. "No sleep for me yet. I feel like an owl. I'm going to walk the beach awhile!"

WHEN Hardwick woke in the morning, Drake hadn't come in. He went down to the stream and had a plunge and then on to the beach. Drake wasn't in sight. He thought of Sweet Fern. Of course! Bingo in his exaltation had met the girl, and— He felt that he should have said something to Drake. He hadn't done his duty.

He went up the valley to the hut of Blade-That-Drinks-Deep. And there that genial old rascal informed him that during the night his daughter Sweet Fern and her brother had disappeared—he thought they'd gone to a kava-drinking up on the mountain. Hardwick went back to his house, rather relieved. Evidently Drake hadn't met the girl, in that case. As yet, for some unaccountable reason, he hadn't a suspicion. It seemed almost accidental that his eye should light upon the spot of his "safety-deposit vault."

Then he ran rapidly down to the beach and saw what he had not noticed before—that the outrigger canoe was gone. He turned instinctively and looked at the sea;



but, of course, he saw nothing. The trades were blowing briskly. Drake had been gone for hours. Hardwick turned back toward the mountain.

For a moment he stood silent. Then he said aloud: "Sold! Hardwick, easy mark! Men and women—after all, they're pretty much alike!"

Suddenly he burst into immoderate laughter. Somewhere the laughter found landward a wall from which to rebound and came echoing back to him. For a moment he didn't catch it. Then he did, and stopped. For quite an appreciable time he heard the sound of his own mirth. And it sounded rather mad to him.

He went grimly and determinedly up to the house and took up things where he had left off.

**I**N the ensuing six years Hardwick prospered. He was through with sentimentality. In its place he enthroned the God of the Sweat of One's Brow. If you were busy enough with your devotions to that god, he reasoned, you got along rather well without companionship. After a year or two he hired two capable young men and paid them a just-adequate salary. He dried more copra than anyone in the islands. He had four splendid crops of vanilla before the blight took his vines. He had all along succeeded rather better than he had expected with the problem of obtaining labor—that bane of the island planter.

At this juncture he had a letter from home. Less than half a dozen lines informed him that he was sole heir to three-quarters of a million. The family ne'er-do-well, his uncle Ben Hardwick, had during a fortunate period of temporary reasonableness abandoned his pursuit of the will-o'-the-wisp of perpetual motion, and invented a kitchen utensil, a toy and a handy motor attachment. Hardwick was requested to present himself in Mainesville, his native city, and assume control of his fortune.

It hadn't been Hardwick's notion that he'd ever care to see Mainesville again after the shameful fiasco of his engagement to Beth Langham. But now, when he thought it over dispassionately, he was surprised to find that he rather looked forward to it.

He sold out to his two assistants and went away. It was while he was going through his personal effects that he came upon an unopened letter nine years old.

He hadn't read letters in the days just after his coming out. He did not recognize the handwriting of this one. He opened it curiously. It was dated a year after his flight from home, and said:

Dear Mr. Hardwick:

For a year everyone has been abusing you terribly. Because I knew you and liked you, it was hard for me to believe them. But it was hard for me to understand why you had left Beth at the last minute without one word of explanation. It wasn't like you. People didn't offer explanations—only rather horrid hints that you'd done something that I oughtn't to know. Just the same, I always believed at heart that you had a reason.

When I came home from school a few weeks ago, I found out, quite by accident, what your real reason must have been. And I want to tell you that I think you were splendid to go away and let everyone censure you for it.

I feel terribly about the way Beth treated you. She too is sorry, and she isn't happy, and I don't believe she ever can be.

Your sincere friend,

SYLVIA LANGHAM.

Hardwick smiled. He remembered Beth's cousin Sylvia, a jolly little girl of sixteen, most affectionately. Strange that he had never thought of her, his one stanch friend, in all these years! She would have been seventeen when she wrote that letter. Fancy stumbling on a horrible, disillusioning story like that at seventeen! And Sylvia then had been such a fine, sweet, unspoiled creature. He shuddered. Then for some dimly perceived reason he folded the letter and took it back to Mainesville with him.

**A**S it happened, Sylvia was almost the first person he met in Mainesville. She recognized him at once and asked him to come and see her. As he had learned that Beth's scandal had come to light years before, and she had left Mainesville, he felt that he could do that.

It became evident to him almost at once that his misogyny as well as his misanthropy was a thing of the past. He began to wonder if Sylvia had all these years remained single because—

One day he dared greatly and asked her. And she told him that she had.

There was luck, you see—good luck! He had got money, exculpation and the one divinely appointed woman at last. True, there was cause and effect there too. He'd worked hard; he had character of a firm, enduring sort.

But suppose we look at Bingo Drake.

It happened rather oddly. Hardwick's bride wanted to see the part of the world that had harbored her husband for so many years; and he, nothing loath, took her there. They went on afterward to the Orient by way of Sydney and the Dutch islands.

And in one of their stopping-places Hardwick ran upon Drake, a most disreputable-looking piece of drift in a very scummy quarter of a not too savory town at its best. It was pure chance by which he recognized his one-time partner, a familiar remembered gesture, for the latter had changed very much for the worse and aged fifteen years.

Hardwick paused. After a long stare the other recognized him, without fear or very keen interest.

"Easy Hardwick, eh?" he said with a faint sneer. "And lucky, too, curse you, I can see that! Rich, aren't you?"

"Very," admitted Hardwick. "And you don't seem to have gotten very far. As I remember, you were to—"

Bingo Drake laughed scornfully. "The cursed luck against me—always. Never had a chance."

"If you'd stayed with me!" Hardwick suggested. "I did well. As it happened, you couldn't have lost. I came into a lot of money later on. I'd have seen you through, if—"

"If!" said Drake. "If—if—if! Why, you fool, don't you suppose I know that? Why, *if* the chances I've missed had broken *my* way instead of— *If*!"

"You never went back to your mother or—what was her name?—Ethel?"

Drake glared at him with a mild venom, not replying.

"I've often wondered," said Hardwick, "how the pearl episode ended. I suppose—"

"Oh," said Drake, without interest or resentment, "it didn't skin. That's all. Dished myself by running away with a

worthless bit of nacre. You never know your luck. Rather good, eh? Splendid joke! Let's laugh!"

"After all," said Hardwick reflectively, "I wonder if honesty—"

"Bah!" said Drake. "Honesty—dishonesty—right—wrong: only fools prattle about such things! It's all a game. It's luck—that's all. And the cards were stacked against me."

"No," persisted Hardwick, "they were all in your favor there for a while, if you'd played the game honestly yourself. But you tried to force it. If you'd waited a few years patiently, you could have gone back. You'd have won. It seems to prove—"

"It proves nothing—nothing!" snarled Drake. "Because, d'you see, if the damned pearl had been good, I'd have gone back *right then*. I swear I would! I meant to go straight ever after. I'd have gone back. Yes, I would!"

"How could I tell? It might just as well have been good; it might just as well have been. From the very beginning nothing but a run of bad luck—ever since I was a little kid! And the game's nearly over now. Only one more stake to play and that will be the end."

"And as for you—if you're so rich, why don't you loosen up? If I had a few gulden I could forget my troubles for a while at least. You oughtn't to grudge me that. After all, what I stole from you was only a few francs. The damn' pearl was worth nothing."

Hardwick thrust a handful of money on him, and watched him go inside the dive before which he had been standing.

Hardwick stood there a moment reflecting. "I wonder if he *would* have gone back—and gone straight—if the pearl had been good?" he thought. "Who knows? I don't!" Then he walked on to the hotel where Sylvia was waiting for him. The next day they sailed for Singapore. And Bingo Drake slept off a fine drunk.

**F**REDERICK R. BECHDOLT, George Allan England, Robert J. Casey, Paul Fitzgerald, Gladys Johnson and William Almon Wolff are some of the writers who will contribute to our next issue. Be sure to get your copy early. You'll find it especially enjoyable.



# Oolong, Mixed

**T**HE Chinese are peculiar; and the female of the species is more deadly than the male; and—just see what happened.



**I** NOTICED the Chinaman was panting as he entered.

He shuffled up to the desk. It had been raining outside, and the thick felt soles of his slippers squashed as he walked.

He spoke very softly.

"White Missee say come quick!"

I stared at him, wondering why his eyes bulged so queerly in his face. I couldn't help thinking of a funny old mandarin doll that used to stand on my grandmother's mantel back home. I had a crazy desire to touch his head, to see if it would wobble obligingly back and forth, as the mandarin's did.

"White Missee!" I said "Who—where—why? For the love of Confucius, how?"

The Chinaman stared.

"Go slow," I said. "Remember, son, you're fooling with the U. S. Government." I frowned at him; you can have a lot of fun with the "heathen Chinese." "Where's your credentials?" I said.

The Chinaman gaped like one of those dead flat-fish they dote on in that God-forsaken chop-stick country of theirs:

"Cledentia?"

"Sure," I said, "credentials. Paper with picture-writing on it—baby-blue ribbon around it—nice fat seals stuck all over it for jewelry."

The Chinaman giggled.

"Jew'lee?" he said, "Much plentee jew'lee."

He clawed at me excitedly; his fingers were yellow and clammy to the touch:

BY MARY WEIK

"Much' jew'lee," he said. "Maybe li'le ring, huh? Li'le ring with red bead—say?"

I started to roll me a good old American cigarette.

"You're talking," I said.

You see, I was new to the country then—hadn't been consul much more than a month; and being new, I was just naturally suspicious. All this mystery-stuff made me sort of homesick; it so reminded me of the good old American game of stall: patent-medicine stuff, you know, and all that. I can't help my eye. I was born and brought up in the state of Kansas, U. S. A., and they teach us to be careful and steer clear of the sharks, in Kansas.

**M**AYBE I spoke to the poor yellow man a little bit rough.

"Speak up!" I said, "I like the hang of your queue, and the cut of your shirt is a pleasure to the eye; but really, I'm a busy man, Columbus—sail on!"

The Chinaman smiled naïvely.

"Thank," he said.

I saw he hadn't understood a word. It was getting on my nerves. I took hold of his flowing black-silk sleeve and hauled him to the door.

"Goo'by, dearie," I said. "Time to go home. Come back again some day, and maybe we'll serve tea—tea, darling, just for us two. Wont that be sweet?"

I gave him a shove through the door. But he wouldn't be shoved. He bounced back into the room like a shiny, yellow-rubber ball.

"Pleace!" he begged, falling on his knees and wailing some queer, soft singsong Chinese word over and over. "Pleace!"

It was as good as a play. Really, I was enjoying myself, when suddenly he did an awful thing: he brought his head down to the floor—and kissed my shoes! After that I wasn't responsible: no self-respecting male man on earth would stand having his feet kissed. It was an awful moment; I must have blushed; I was scared to death some one might come in and see us there. It was terrible.

I seized the yellow man by the nape of the neck and flung him out of the door.

"Run," I said; I couldn't trust myself to say any more.

I must have looked rather terrible. At any rate, I could hear him running long after I had lost sight of him in the crooked little street that crawls past the offices down to the river.

I went back to my desk and sat there a long time, wishing I was out of this job of mine and back in the States. Dusk—a thick, yellow Chinese dusk—was just beginning to fall. It made me horribly homesick, because dusk in China is so terribly different from dusk at home. At home there's something warm and friendly and human about it: all the little squares of lighted windows, fried potatoes sizzling away in the kitchen, the Dobbsses across the street playing one last, lingering game of croquet, the old Dominicker rounding up her chickens for the night, the paper-boy with the daily *Clarion*, father in his shirt-sleeves dozing over the "History of the World," the Methodist minister has persuaded him to read, Mother in the kitchen with flour on her chin, making soda-biscuit for supper—well, it all got hold of me somehow and just about did me up.

Underneath my window a man and a Chinese woman went by; I could tell the woman by her short, choppy steps. They were whispering together as they passed. I couldn't catch the words. The thin, strong smoke from the man's pipe rose and curled in through the window and clung in the air.

Across the street an oil-lamp smoked for a while in a window, then went out. Five or six chattering coolies ran past at a loping gait; their bare feet made no sound in the

mud of the street. Two girls scurried across the window, muffled up to the chin, their little wooden clogs clicking as fast as their tongues. I heard one of them laugh. Out over the roofs I could see one yellow star and the tip of a thin new moon showing over the sail of a river-junk. A crowd of Chinese soldiers rode by, with lighted lanterns slung over their shoulders on long black poles. Once in a while a door would swing open and pour a stream of yellow light out into the street; there would be a sound of high voices, quarreling, singing, laughing. Once I thought I heard a scream. Then the door closed, and the dense throbbing silence poured back into the street.

AS I sat there alone in the dark, the ancientness of the place got me by the throat, choked me. Of a sudden I knew that I was no longer a stranger or foreign. I understood. Perhaps I only remembered, something inside of me whispered—I don't know. Across the street somewhere a door opened and a stream of thin, high music surged like a heat-wave out into the dark. I caught the throb of a Chinese drum; then the door slammed shut again—but not before I had seen the uplifted hurling arm of the man standing black against the light.

Involuntarily I drew back just in time to hear the thing hurtle past me in the dark. I hunted for a match, my heart pounding absurdly—it seemed hours before I found one. My fingers were stiff and strangely numb; my head throbbed. After an age I unearthed one precious match. I cupped it carefully in one hand and held it to the wick of the oil-lamp on the desk. It caught and made a feeble flame, then blazed high. For a while I could see nothing, even in the flare of the lamp; I thought I was blind. But after a bit my eyes cleared, and my heart went back to almost normal time. I saw a small brown package on the floor. I picked it up, and the touch of it burned my naked palm like fire. It was absurd.

I tried to laugh at myself. "John H. Kennedy of Kansas," I said, "you're making a fool of yourself."

But that didn't help any. The package teased my hand like something alive.

"If you're a fool, John Kennedy, you'll open it," I said.

I opened it. It was rather disappointing. Inside was only a slip of paper and a tiny lacquer box, perhaps an inch square.



I looked at the paper first. There were only a few words on it, and those were scrawled awkwardly, as if a right-handed person were trying to write with his left: *"Please come. In a little while it will be too late."*

THERE was no name. Perhaps it was that which made a little shiver run down my spine. Perhaps!

My fingers rather trembled as I opened the box. I don't know what I expected to find. I guess I was ready for anything—from a poisoned dart to a piece of the Lord Buddha's thumb. But all I saw at first was another little slip of rice-paper. I looked again and saw that the paper was twisted through a ring. And the like of that ring is not to be found in this world. I happen to know something about jewels.

It was all made out of rare green gold, hand-beaten and hand-carved. The setting, exquisitely worked, was cut in the shape of two long, slender hands, the fingers interlaced to hold the single jewel—a Burmese ruby that was like a cup of blood. I am absolutely sure of one thing: that stone has no mate in this world. It had one once, but you don't hear about that. . . . At any rate, it was a perfect stone, a stone to worship, adore. And I know jewels. It was hard to tear my eyes away from the thing, but at last I took a look at the slip of paper that was wrapped around it. There was writing on it, the same awkward hand as in the note:

*This is to show you I am playing fair. I send you this for a key, because you know good stones, especially rubies.*

I read it again—very carefully. Yes, it was all there—"especially rubies." Now, how on earth did this nameless person know I had wasted fifteen good years of my life in the study of jewels—"especially rubies"?

It was uncanny. I felt myself getting cold.

"Li'le ring with red bead," the Chinaman had said.

IT could not have taken me more than a minute to catch up a hat and stick and dash down into the street—hardly that long; but when I reached the house across the street, every light was gone and the place was as still as a vault. I was not surprised; by now I had got to the point

of expecting such things to happen. I merely knocked, once, quite calmly, at the rickety wooden door.

As I had expected, there was no answer.

I knocked again, as a matter of form—then thrust my shoulder against the door, and lunged as the old college coach used to teach us—"heads down and eyes front, damn you!"

I sprawled full length inside; the door had not even been latched. I picked myself up, feeling very much of a fool. I heard a titter of laughter, and I wheeled about, thoroughly mad; but I could see no one anywhere in the room. To tell the truth, I could find no one in the entire house, though I searched every foot of the place with my pocket flash. It had every look and smell of a house that has lain deserted for years—pools of dust on the floor, cobwebs hanging heavy from the ceiling-cloths, rats scurrying back and forth with the air of fussy proprietors, everywhere the musty smell of old decaying wood.

I began to doubt myself. Perhaps I had dreamed it all, even to the Chinaman. I decided that must be it—just a nice promising dream. I was turning a bit sadly to leave the house when suddenly, out of nowhere, a big, soft hand came and settled on my shoulder. It was a peculiar sensation. I did what about any man would do. I jumped, noticeably.

The Chinaman stared at me gravely. I wondered if he was going to kiss my shoe. I hoped not.

He took my arm in his.

"Hurry," he said placidly.

I let him lead me back through the house and out through a low tunnel-like entry—still with that same strange feeling of acting out a dream. He held my hand and pulled me along like a child. I followed meekly enough; it was a good thing—I could never have found my way out of those crooked little alleys and by-streets alone.

Altogether, it was the queerest trip I ever took. Our road went through the back yards of the towns, through their gardens, and once or twice through their very houses. Little squalid houses they were, full of a swarm of little yellow people that blinked at us incuriously as we passed. Sometimes they muttered among themselves, staring at my foreign clothes. Sometimes they jostled us threateningly, but the Chinaman merely shoved them aside and went on. In one house a little

singing-girl smiled at me as we passed, and tried to make me wait and hear her sing. I might have waited—she was rather beautiful; but the Chinaman flung her a piece of money and pulled me on.

It seemed to me we had been running along for hours when the Chinaman stopped abruptly, and we ducked into the low door of what looked like a shop. In the States we would call it a junk-shop. It was littered from front to back with the queerest conglomeration of things I ever saw: chairs, jewelry, fire-bricks, garden tools, wigs, images, shoes and slippers and clogs of all sorts and sizes, long gray strings of Chinese herbs dangling from the ceiling, a really beautiful Canton lamp swinging in the center of the room. The air was heavy with the smell that is peculiar to China—a mixture of incense and dirt and the bitter smoke of strong Chinese pipes. I remember the taste of it on my tongue—bittersweet.

The Chinaman had disappeared in the back of the shop; I could hear a whispering. He came back with a suit of Chinese clothes hung over his arm.

He held them up.

"Play li'le game," he whispered. "See? 'Melican man no good." He went through the motions of putting on clothes. "See? Take off 'Melican, put on Chinaman—see?"

I nodded. So there was to be a mask! I began to be interested.

As I laid off my things, the Chinaman gathered them up, one by one, and bundled them neatly together. Finally he stuffed the whole lot into the mouth of a huge earthen jar standing in the shadow. Again he ducked into the back of the shop, and I heard the same low whispering again. This time he came out balancing a tiny red bowl in one hand. As he neared me, I saw that the bowl was half full of a thick brownish liquid. I wondered what it was, but by this time I had learned to keep my mouth shut—always.

The Chinaman said nothing. From the depths of his black silk sleeve he extracted a little brush of soft camel's hair; this he dipped into the bowl of hot liquid and began to smear it over my face. I submitted patiently—there was nothing else to do; and after a while he blew on his fingers and asked if I would like to see a very ugly Chinaman. I said yes, of course; and he got me a mirror from the wall and let me look at myself.

He was right about the ugliness. I never saw a homelier Chinaman in my life. As I stood there, staring, the fellow stuck a greasy black queue on my head; and there I stood, complete—a nasty Oriental, from my painted almond eyes to my flapping trousers of pale blue silk and my stiff embroidered shoes. I got away from the glass as quickly as I could, wondering what they would think of this in Kansas. It made me laugh a little—soft and sly, as Chinamen laugh.

**S**UDDENLY I heard a noise of voices, quarreling. There was a stream of what must have been profanity, then a yell and a clattering of feet in my direction. My Chinaman rushed out of the back of the shop, almost falling over me where I stood. After him came a shriveled little yellow man, shrieking at the top of his voice.

I grabbed my Chinaman by the neck and shook him. "What does he want?" I said.

He gasped. "Monee!" he wailed. "Moch monee!"

I was worried. I hadn't a cent on me; moreover, all I did have on belonged to this angry jabbering Chinese merchant.

The little man stationed himself at the door. There was a bulge in his sleeve, like a crooked knife.

"No pay, no go," he said.

Back in the shop I could hear the murmur of other voices. That meant there was no use trying to rush him. I turned to my Chinaman angrily; why had I let the fool get me into all this?

"It's up to you, dearie," I said.

He shook his head; I saw he was at the point of tears.

"No monee," he said plaintively, turning his pockets out for me to see. "No monee at all!"

I began to unbutton my blue silk coat. We're honest in Kansas, anyway, and we don't wear other people's clothes without paying for them.

"Say—"

I could tell by the Chinaman's voice that he'd cornered an idea somewhere.

He came up close to my ear:

"Li'le ring!" he whispered. "Li'le ring with red bead!"

I gathered he wanted me to flash it. I didn't know why, but I fished around for a while and finally found it in my sleeve, which is the one and only pocket in a Chinese suit. I had put the thing there when I changed my clothes.



I pulled it out and showed it to the merchant. He looked at it carelessly enough at first; then a queer dazed look shot over his face, and he threw himself flat on the floor. A feeling of awful despair came over me—the man was going to kiss my feet, of course! It made me feel like a hunted animal. I turned to my Chinaman and motioned him to run. There was just one thought in my head—escape.

I picked up my flapping trousers and started to flee. My Chinaman was slower. He had recovered his dignity by this time and was lighting a long, thin cigarette he had filched off the counter. As he followed me out of the door, he stooped and very solemnly kicked the prostrate merchant on the head, twice.

The man did not move. We shut the door behind us and went on up the street.

IT was late, perhaps midnight, when we came at last to the House of the Red Wall—so late that we had to knock several times before the porter heard us and came grumbling down to open the gate. I had time enough, as we waited, to notice how very high and thick this garden wall was, strangely thick. The porter stared at me suspiciously. I was the new kitchen-boy, the Chinaman explained. The porter said something to me, but the Chinaman put a finger to his lips and shook his head sorrowfully, meaning that I was dumb. The porter said a few sympathetic words, recommending me to the care of the inscrutable gods—and we passed in through the gate.

Within the wall we entered on a crooked little garden path that wove oddly in and out of a clump of toy willows. Once a branch touched my face, and I jumped as if I had been shot. I thought I heard the Chinaman laugh, but when I turned around his face was as grave as ever.

The moon came out just then and showed me the house. There was nothing extraordinary about it, that I could see. It was just the usual flimsy Chinese house—a little bit larger than common; that was all. Its roof had the inevitable pagoda-snob, and was built of the same sort of stuff as the garden wall—little hump-backed tiles that gave it a sort of corduroy effect. There was nothing at all peculiar about the house, I decided.

At the end of the path we came upon a door set deep in a mass of vines. The Chinaman knocked softly, three times. I

waited, holding my breath. On the other side of the door I heard voices; then a hand answered back, beating the wood twice, sharply. After a moment the Chinaman knocked again. The door slid open.

It was very dark inside. A rush of cold air struck us as we entered; I remembered feeling just such air before—in an old haunted house in the Berkshire Hills, when I was a child on a visit to my grandmother. I guessed that we were standing in a long passage. After a while a light flared up, and I saw an ugly little Chinese girl at my elbow.

She grinned, showing a row of blackened teeth.

"China-man?" she asked.

I nodded. I was afraid of this grinning little thing.

She teetered back and forth on her heels, giggling.

"Oh, so ogly a Chinaman—so ogly!" she tittered, taking me in from head to foot.

I was uncomfortable; perhaps I showed it. At any rate my Chinaman seized the girl by the shoulders and pushed her ahead up the passage. She made some sharp retort, probably profane, then led the way on with the light.

I counted the doors we passed, and we stopped at the thirteenth. It worried me, but I said nothing. The girl rapped once on the wall beside the door, then left us. I could see her light bobbing down the passage.

"Come in," said a voice.

We parted the reed curtains that flapped at the door, and went in.

AT first I saw nothing but a sort of greenish glow; then slowly things began to shape themselves. I saw a lamp, tall and fringed with silk, perched high on a long brass foot; a couch strewn with cushions, more cushions on the floor; a round yellow ball of a kitten. Finally I saw the woman on the couch.

She lay there nonchalantly enough, an arm beneath her head, one little red-slippered foot beating out the tune of the song she was humming. The glow of the lamp rippled over the blue-black coils of her hair, looped high as Chinese women have looped their hair since the world began. Her hands were narrow and exquisitely kept, as are the hands of all Chinese women of rank; the nails were delicately pointed and shone like pink glass. Her coat and

square loose trousers were made of some marvelous yellow brocaded stuff that can be found only in China, where weavers are bound to their looms. Her jade and silver necklace and the jeweled kingfisher-feather pins that caught up the loops of her hair were the kind that Chinese queens used to sell their little souls for.

Her dress was exquisitely Chinese, but her face might have belonged to any country. There was a hint of the Spaniard in the droop of the mouth, but the nose was piquant and French. Her skin was pale, like the skin of all Oriental women who spend the whole of their lives indoors. But her eyes eluded me; sometimes I thought they were an Irish gray—then all at once they would deepen to a provoking violet, the color of Russian women's eyes.

"You may-go, Chang," said the voice.

And then I knew. I had been altogether wrong. Her dress may have been Chinese, and her face a medley of nations—but the voice was unmistakably American. I must have stared. For just then I caught the words of the tune she was humming: "Some little bug will get you sometime—"

I looked at her. She was laughing.

"That's just about the limit, isn't it, Mr. Kennedy?"

I nodded. It *was* the limit, as far as I was concerned. It was putting Gog on top of Magog—as my Aunt Manetta, who teaches school, would say. How on earth this exquisite old-world princess had got hold of the most screamingly modern song on the U. S. A. vaudeville boards?

It was beyond me, absolutely.

"Really, though, it's quite simple," said the princess-person. "Look!"—pointing to something in the corner of the room.

I looked. It was a phonograph. Honestly, it was the most comforting thing I had seen in weeks. I wanted to put my head down on its shiny Circassian-walnut top and weep.

"Gee!" I said.

"I couldn't do without that thing," said the Princess. "It's the only little piece of the U. S. A. I own."

There was something deep and wistful in her eyes now; they looked the color of violets after rain.

"But you *are* American, aren't you?" I asked.

"A little bit," said the Princess. "I'm a little bit of everything—and nothing." She stopped.

I waited; after a while she went on:

"My great-grandfather was a Portuguese pirate in the Caribbean." She smiled. "I have an uncle in Wall Street now. One of my grandfathers was an artist and made landscapes. The other was a manufacturer; he made buttons. My mother was a Chinese noblewoman; my father was a New England missionary. Behold!" she laughed. "The history of me!"

I laughed too.

"As we say out in Kansas," I remarked, "it takes a powerful lot of rumpus to turn out one little ax-handle."

"Thanks," said the Princess. "My uncle, the mandarin, could do no better!" Her eyes were very gray and laughing.

She leaned over to touch a gong in the wall.

"You must be very hungry after such a night," she said.

THE ugly little maid pattered in, and after a few quick words, withdrew again. Several minutes later she returned and set a flat lacquer tray beside the couch. There were all sorts of wonderful things on the tray: crisp little rice-cakes and cubes of red and white Chinese cheese, a great warm bowl of *Yuen Jai* and a bowl of chow and a quantity of little sticks of sesamum-seed candy—"Ge Mar Tong," the Princess called it.

I made her say it over again; it sounded so pretty in her mouth.

The little maid came back after a bit and took the empty tray away. She came back with tea-things and a bowl of cigarettes—long Chinese ones, brown, with straw tips.

The Princess made tea. It was a regular ceremony, the way she did it; it made me feel like a Mongol prince. I proposed we should drink the Emperor's health, and we did, though I wasn't exactly sure there was an emperor on the throne just then; you never can tell in China.

After tea there were cigarettes, and the Princess lighted mine with the tip of her own.

It was fine; I don't usually approve of ladies smoking, but I must say it was becoming to the Princess.

For a long while we sat there, smoking together without a word. It was too perfect to spoil. But after a while my cigarette burned down, and I reached for another.

"Do you know," I said, "I was just a little bit surprised to find things so quiet here. From the tone of your note—well,



really, I looked for a little excitement."

She didn't say anything. I looked up after a while and saw she was crying.

"Now what have you gone and done, you fool man!" I thought. "Another of your confounded breaks!"

I went over to the Princess and patted her on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, little girl," I said. "Tell me—what's the matter?"

She straightened up then, and I lent her my handkerchief. It was pretty big, but she said it was just the size she liked, anyway. Then she said she must look awful—and she made me turn my back while she put some rice-powder on her nose. After that she told me to sit down again.

I went back to my cushion on the floor, and she lay back with her eyes closed, looking awfully little and tired. But in a minute or so she brightened up again, and she told me what all the trouble was, why she had sent for me, and everything.

IT seemed her father had come to Nang-ho as a missionary about twenty years before, along in the fall of '98. And the mandarin of the town, Wu Hung-Tao, had treated him like a gentleman—so very much like a gentleman that Thomas Curzon, the missionary, had proceeded to do the only gentlemanly thing, fall in love with the mandarin's sister. Eventually he had married her—as the Chinese marry. Of course, after that, his church back home disowned him; and so Thomas Curzon had done the only thing there was left to do: he became a Chinaman. As brother-in-law to the mandarin, his road was smooth. They had been very happy, the girl told me, except once in a while when her father would have one of his homesick spells. Then he would take her into his library, she said, and lock the door, and drill America into her by the hour.

"Remember," he would tell her, "you're white! Will you remember, girl? *White!*"

She couldn't ever forget, she said; it was burned into her too deeply. That was why she had laughed at her uncle the mandarin when he had come to her, just yesterday, wild with the news that a Chinese prince had asked for her hand. That was why she had weathered the storm that followed, when he had threatened to turn her out of his house into the street. And that was why—she lifted the silky edge of her sleeve away from her arm, and I saw a terrible thing. Her wrist was bound fast to the

couch with a loop of thin silver wire. You could see where it had bitten into the flesh—deep. Suddenly I remembered the awkward scrawl of the note—how she had poured tea with her left hand.

"And so I sent for you," she ended, "—because you were American."

Before I left the Curzon girl that night we had carefully worked out a plan between us for her escape. It was really very simple: she was merely to leave the country as the wife of John H. Kennedy, U. S. Consul at Nang-ho. It was my plan, you know, and I was rather ashamed of the triteness of it; but the Curzon girl took up with it right away. It was a perfectly brilliant plan, she said, worthy of Li of the Iron Crutch, King of Magicians. She wanted to start right away. But I told her the boat didn't leave till the next night, and anyway, I'd have to hunt her up some civilized clothes to travel in. She pouted rather at that, but gave in finally when I explained to her that the ship was very big and dirty and would spoil her embroidered outfit.

I HAD agreed to find a suit of American clothes, and that was what was bothering me that morning as I sat there at my desk and scowled at a foggy sun. I had agreed to do an impossible thing—because outside of myself and the British Resident, Somers, there wasn't an English-speaking person in town.

I must have looked pretty down in the mouth. Somers bounced in from across the street and stopped short in the doorway. I could hear him gasp.

"Why, Ken, old man," he said very solemnly, "who's dead?"

I was too worried to fool with him. "Good morning," I said.

"Ah, good morning, sir!" Somers bowed.

"What do you want?" I said.

"What do I want, indeed?" Somers sounded miffed. "Here I come to bring you good tidings, like the angel I am, and you—"

"Shoot the news, dear," I said.

I wasn't really interested, but Somers is a good fellow and I hate to hurt his feelings.

He grinned. "Velly good news!" he chortled. "White folks in town."

I gasped: "White!"

"Very," Somers assured me. "White as the hawthorn bud in May. And believe me, my boy, the lady is the real thing!"

I grabbed up my hat. "Where is she stopping?" I asked.

"At the only hotel in town, of course, the *Royale*." Somers was staring.

I seized his hand and pumped it up and down. "Somers," I said affectionately, "you damfool man—you don't know it yet, but you've saved my life!"

Somers followed me out of the door.

"Ken, old man," he said earnestly, "you go home and take a lot of quinine—a whole lot!"

The strange Americans were out sight-seeing when I got to the hotel; so I had a clear field.

I noticed the Chinese hall-boy looked at me a bit queerly as I came down the stairs. I was not surprised; it was a queer-looking bundle. I hadn't had time to pack the things very neatly, and a long blue satin ribbon trailed from one end, and a fuzzy ostrich feather stuck out between the strings and tickled my ear as I walked. I thought the hall-boy started to open his mouth; so I flung him a silver dollar and hurried on. I had no time to waste explaining.

At the door I met the white woman and her husband, coming in; but they were too busy absorbing local color to notice me. I jammed my hat down over my eyes and went on.

I was nervous. I remembered my grandmother's advice: "When you don't know what to do, count your blessings."

I could think of only one, but that was a big one: thank God, there was a whole Pacific Ocean between me and Kansas!

**T**HERE isn't much more to tell.

Chang came for me again that night, and we took the long trip out to the House of the Red Wall. This time I didn't go in. I sent Chang up with the bundle of clothes while I waited below in the street under the Curzon girl's window. After a while I heard a little call; I looked up to see a hand throw something down to me.

"Catch!" said the girl.

It was a rope-ladder. I held it firm while the girl crept down the rungs. She was as happy as a bird, and chattered all the way down. The ladder was a little bit short; I had to lower her to the ground in my arms. She was no burden; I had never dreamed anyone could be so absurdly light.

Once on the ground, she danced a few steps away, out into the moonlight. Even with the American clothes, she still looked

like a princess—a tailored Fifth Avenue princess.

She curtseyed: "Mrs. John H. Kennedy, U. S. A.," she said. And then: "What a funny game, Johnny!"

I wished to myself that it wasn't a game at all. Of course I'm supposed to be engaged to a girl at home—a nice, good, sensible girl, too; but it came to me what a pale dead thing she would look beside this girl.

"Let's play it's *not* a game!" I said. "There's a minister up the street."

The princess-girl's eyes darkened.

"No," she said, and then so soft I barely caught the words: "Not—now."

Away down the river a steamer's siren cut into the dusk. We could hear a ship's bell vibrate once; then the town sank back into the dark. Only the long arm of a searchlight swung out across the sky.

"We must hurry," said the girl, pulling at my arm.

I put her into the rickshaw that was waiting in the shadow. Then I got into another, and we swung down the street.

"Tell them to go to the river—quickly," I told the girl.

She gave them their orders.

We rode along for a long time, side by side there in the dark, without saying a word. I don't know what she was thinking about; but I know that my head was throbbing with just one sharp thought: *She's going away! she's going away! she's going away!*

I could turn my head and see her sitting there, bolt upright under the rickshaw's hood. I wondered what she was thinking. I knew she was happy: I could hear her singing little bits of song.

"Princess," I said, "what makes you so happy?"

She put out her hand. I could feel where the wire had cut cruel lines across it.

"You'd be happy too!" she said.

Sometimes a door would open as we passed, and pour a flood of laughter and shrill high music over us. The Princess would laugh, I with her. I thought I was beginning to understand the place.

"A light, a song, and a closed door—that's China!" said the girl.

I nodded.

"All that," I said, "and one thing more—a princess."

The girl laughed. "There are a million princesses!" she said.

"You're wrong," I said. "For every



man in the world there's one small princess—just one."

The girl did not answer. Maybe she hadn't heard me.

About a half-hour later we came hurrying to the river. The wharf was black with coolies, running aimlessly back and forth, loading and unloading in one grand mêlée: great squeaking bars of teak balancing precariously overhead, swinging slowly down on deck; cases of Chinese tea hurrying on board; bales of American cotton cloth and great crated masses of American machinery running down to the shore. Everywhere shouting, heat, confusion.

Weaving smoothly in and out of the crowd with the ease of long experience, pushing, kicking here and there, swearing wherever their voices could be heard,—which was seldom,—the rickshaw men brought us to the ship. After that it was a matter of moments to run up the gangway, show our passports and board the ship—Mr. and Mrs. John Kennedy, U. S. A. The custom's officer hurried us past; he knows me.

We went over to the deck rail and stood there, looking back to land.

The Princess' eyes were a sparkling gray.

"Safe!" she whispered.

I turned miserably to go.

"I guess I'll say good-by," I said, "Mrs. Kennedy—Princess."

She caught my arm. She was not smiling now. Her eyes, I saw, were the color of wet violets.

"But I have not thanked you," she said very softly.

Maybe I was a little rude. I didn't look at her when I answered.

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "I guess I'll be going." I fished the ring she had given me out of my pocket and dropped it into her hand.

"Good-by," I said, turning away.

She didn't answer. Again, for the last time, the siren shrieked out above us.

You could see the coolies scurrying ashore like rats.

I started away down the deck. They were getting ready to haul in the gangplank.

"Johnny!"

I heard the girl running after me. I felt her hand on my arm, little and soft.

"Is that all you have to say, John Kennedy," she asked, "—just good-by?"

I jerked my arm away. "Yes," I said,

"that's all—just good-by—Princess!"

I had to hurry to get on the gangplank before they pulled it in.

IT was dark the next day when Somers breezed into the room.

"Heavens, how spooky!" he said. "A light, m' lord, a light—my bloomin' kingdom for a light!"

He was feeling skittish, I saw; that meant one of two things: News, or letters from home. Somers has the queerest nose for news, positively morbid! Give him a murder or a knifing case, and he's as happy as a kid with a new red wagon.

He struck a match briskly and held it to the lamp.

"What do you think," he said, "she got away again!"

I was sleepy; I wished he would go home.

"Who?" I said. "And what did she kill—her father or her poor defenseless child?"

Somers was lighting his vile old pipe. He answered between puffs.

"Rita Valdez," he said. "And she didn't kill anything."

I went over to the sideboard and poured out a stiff little peg. I had been doing it quite regularly all day, and I noticed my hand shook the least little bit.

Somers noticed it too.

"Goin' it a bit too strong, old man," he said, "—aren't you, rather?"

I tried to change the subject.

"Who's Rita Valdez?" I said. "Never heard of her."

"That," observed Somers cordially, "is because you're such a kid." Somers is twenty-six. "Rita Valdez, my boy, is the prettiest, crookedest little mongrel that ever romped over three continents. One-half Spanish, Rita is, and two-thirds French, and three-fifths American, and one-sixth Chinese—and then about ten-tenths devil.

"When she doesn't steal, she smuggles. She can make a real fool out of any man on earth—absolutely!" Somers blew envious smoke-rings: "They say she stages her scenes magnificently. Loves the good old melodrammer, y' know! Oh, every merchant in the Orient knows little Rita—particularly jewelers!

"You see, she dotes on jewels—especially rubies."

Somers eyed me solicitously.

"Really, old man," he said, "you look ghastly. Try quinine."



## CHAPTER I

**H**ER first contact with the law trembled delightfully in the mists of her childhood memory. A huge policeman smiled down on her in the street; his voice rumbled like thunder far up in the heavens and then she was swept from the earth and pillowed on a wide expanse of blue near a shining silver badge. She could dimly remember his unpinning a note attached to her clothes. In after years, when she had reached her statutory majority and was leaving the orphanage to take employment as a nurse girl, she was given the time-yellowed bit of paper along with a faded blue baby scarf on which was embroidered the name *Margie*. The document read:

Mister Cop:

I can't keep her any more. I'm all in.

Respectfully,

HER MOTHER.

The tragedy in that brief note of surrender made her tremble as she realized that the outside world had beaten her mother and that now it was her turn to fight single-handed for her life and perhaps for her very soul, for they had taught her that all people, even orphans, had souls.

The lady who was to take her away from the sheltering walls of the asylum was

waiting downstairs in the reception room, that wonderful chamber the door of which no girl passed without pausing to glance in. It was the gateway to an existence shaped differently in the imagination of each.

She had been given a hat and street-clothes and had laid aside for the last time the blue denim uniform of the institution. Her change of underwear and the faded note and scarf lay neatly wrapped before her on her cot in the dormitory. Suddenly from the darkness of the corridor a girl, a little younger, rushed to her on tiptoe and threw her arms about her neck. Their tears mingled.

"Oh, Annie, I'm scared!"

"Don't be scared, Margie."

"I wish we could go out together."

"Margie, if you don't write me a letter, I'll die."

Annie pressed a pretty face with a saucy tipped-up nose against the face of her friend, hugged her fiercely, kissed her a dozen times and darted away, for she was on kitchen duty, and the cook was an over-worked and savage woman.

Margie picked up her little bundle with trembling hands, and with knees which seemed to want to stick to each other, made her way to the gate of the world, leaving behind her the one friend she loved and was sure of, Annie Phelan. Downstairs, within the fateful room, she heard





only distantly the murmur of the head matron's voice in a formula of advice and admonition. A blonde and very handsome woman, dressed in silks and satins and with smooth, colorful cheeks, purred to her, offered the head matron a cash donation, which she drew from a velvet bag, said good-by and started for the street door. Margie was drawn along in her wake, like a tiny bit of flotsam caught by the suction of a splendid yacht moving from anchorage to the wide summer's sea.

She was out!

MARGIE'S heart fluttered like a trapped moth. Outside a taxi was waiting for them at the curb. It would be her first ride. To be swept along without even moving one's feet would be wonderful. Why, they didn't even have to open the door of the car! The chauffeur did that for them. Her fears of what the morrow or the coming years might bring disappeared in the excitement of this first adventure, and as she gradually snuggled into a softly padded corner of the machine, she felt superior to all other orphans. Her front name was her own, at any rate, she told herself; and there were many foundlings without that distinction. *Margie* was her own true belonging, despite the fact that Leroy had been tacked on for the reason that she was picked up in Leroy Street and she needed a second name.

The perfume from the silent, statuesque lady beside her brought rosiness to Margie's dreams. In time she would marry, she assured herself, and then a real, honest-to-goodness last name would be hers. When the taxi stopped and the door flew open, the lady had to speak to her to bring her back to earth. The neighborhood was far from fitting for her employer, she thought, with great disappointment. There were no fine mansions, just small shops and red-faced tenements which seemed half broiled in the sun of the late July afternoon. She sighed with relief as the lady hailed a street-car and boosted her with her bundle to the platform.

In a few minutes the surroundings were more to her liking. The car took on furious speed, passing between fields, beautiful with queen's lace, daisies, black-eyed Susans and orange milkweed, which she thought were carefully planted flowers, placed with artistic carelessness for the pleasure of the very wealthy. Elm trees, rising like green fountains, thrilled her with their grace as she timidly looked beyond the window opposite; but for the most part she sat with her hands folded on the bundle in her lap, her limpid blue eyes cast down, a wistful smile playing about her ripe young lips.

The car stopped at a country lane where a splendid automobile was waiting for them. The chauffeur, a young man with

very sharp and somewhat pallid features, gave her a grin as he threw open the door of the tonneau. The trolley car buzzed off.

"Home, James!" ordered the lady with a laugh.

They sped over roads smooth and roads rough, up hill and down into little valleys, across bridges and finally through two pillars of red brick ornamented with white vases filled with pink geraniums. The motor stopped before what was to Margie's eyes the most beautiful home that was ever built. But the house was not a real mansion. It was just a comfortable, pretty country place with three sharply pointed gables, a broad piazza, and vines and flowers all about it. Under a tree, quite near them as they left the car, was a baby carriage holding a fat youngster.

"There's your job, Margie," said her employer, pointing to the little one. "His name is Tommy."

## CHAPTER II

JAMES, the sharp-featured young man who was the boss of the garage and who boasted that his runabout was the fastest thing that ever traveled on the ground, dumped a handful of big peaches into Margie's lap. She sat with her back against the trunk of a shady maple tree, the baby on the velvet-like grass beside her, counting his toes and uttering strange gurgling sounds of infantile bliss. It was the end of her second week in heaven.

"Eat 'em," suggested James. "There's a million more like 'em in the orchard."

"Don't make a noise, Jimmy," she warned, holding the rosiest and most luscious of her gifts before her white teeth. "I'm afraid I'll wake up."

"Say, lookit!" He threw himself on the grass beside her, lying flat on his stomach and looking up to her with frankly admiring eyes. "This aint any tarab I'm handing you—"

"What's tarab?"

"That's Irish for bull. You're sweeter than any of them peaches, you are."

"Me?" Margie looked startled and then lowered her eyes and searched her memory for a compliment to pay him in return. She couldn't think of anything to say, and her cheeks burned her.

"Honest," continued James ever so softly, "I think you sittin' there with that

kid the prettiest picture ever a man like me laid his eyes on." A tinge of color came to his white cheeks, and there was sincerity in his voice. "I'm telling you, baby. If you said the word, I'd straighten up and show you what a man I could be. I'd work for the likes of you, work hard, day and night." His voice died away, and only the wind laughing in the leaves above her kept the girl from hearing her heart thundering in response to the first words of love given her.

"I like you," she managed to say. The hand she gave him trembled violently, but as he tried to kiss her she drew away from him. "Please don't," she begged. "You see, I've only been here a little while, and I'm afraid I might lose this job. It's heaven—just heaven." She picked up Tommy and held him to her breast, a mist gathering in her eyes. "I would die if anything happened to take him away from me. Mrs. Townsend lets him sleep with me now, and he's just like he was my own baby."

"What else would you like to have in this world?" he asked.

"I've got everything now."

"Would you like a diamond ring?" he persisted.

"A diamond ring!" she gasped, stretching out the fingers of one hand. "Gee, Jimmy!"

"How about this?" The chauffeur opened his hand, and in the palm lay a jewel of such magnificent splendor that Margie could only stare at it in mute amazement. The stone was huge and with a faint touch of blue to its dancing light. The crown setting was of platinum upon a slender band of gold. "Try it on, honey," he suggested with a smile. But she was afraid to touch it. "Just to see whether it fits," he coaxed. "Please, dear."

"I'm scared to, Jimmy," she returned. "You keep it. Honest, I'm scared to." But her eyes did not leave the blaze of blue light. "Why, it must be—uh—worth a thousand dollars!"

"A thousand!" cried Jimmy with a broad grin. "Why, it's worth more than fifty thousand."

"Oh!" It was all far beyond her grasping. But she was not any and everybody's fool despite her lack of worldly experience.

"How did you get it?" she asked, putting the baby on the grass and half lying beside it.



"I picked it up."

"Jimmy, is that true?" She turned swiftly over on her left elbow and looked him squarely in the eyes. He did not flinch, but his natural pallor became a shade more marked. He nodded slowly.

"But didn't the owner advertise for it?" The question seemed to give him relief. He moved a little nearer her and reached in the inside pocket of his jacket, taking therefrom a newspaper clipping.

Ten thousand dollars cash will be paid for the return of blue diamond ring lost or stolen Thursday last near Tarrytown. No questions asked. Finder will deal direct with owner's lawyers, Walker, Peabody and Wilkins, Eagle Trust Co. Building, Nassau Street, New York.

After reading the advertisement aloud, he passed it to her. She studied it carefully, turned it over, saw that it was genuine and handed it back to him with a trembling hand. "What a lot of money to have!" she murmured. "What will you do with it, Jimmy?"

"I'll tell you when I get it," he laughed. He managed to slip an arm about her waist.

"Please don't; I'm scared. Jimmy! You'll squash the baby!"

"The money's all yours, Margie."

"Please, Jimmy; you're hurting me."

"Mrs. Townsend is going off with an automobile party tomorrow, and you can collect that money yourself. I'll take you in town in the runabout and wait for you on the sidewalk." The leaves above them gave almost boisterous approval as Margie got herself free from her lover's arms, and half sobbing, shielded herself from another foray on her lips by holding the infant before her.

"Then, when you have the money, we can get married," he added when he recovered his breath. She stared straight ahead of her, over the white poll of the perfectly contented Tommy. At length came a great sigh. The past had been so different: walls with the lower windows covered with heavy wire netting; an occasional glimpse of a dusty, noisy street; an ill-cut uniform dress of grayish-blue, buttoned up the back and fitting like a sack; perhaps twice a year the welcome excitement that came with the news that some girl had managed to escape to the open outside world; food seldom fit to eat or sufficient in quantity. And now she was

being kissed by a young man, offered ten thousand dollars, eating as many peaches as she could possibly hold, and had a real baby to love and play with.

"Tomorrow morning, right after the old bird leaves," she heard Jimmy saying. As he strolled back to the garage, she nervously felt Tommy's head, his plump arms and cool feet. "If he as much as budges," she said to herself drowsily, "I'll wake up sure."

### CHAPTER III

MARGIE was finishing the ever welcome task of giving Tommy his afternoon bath when Mrs. Townsend entered her room quietly and stood for a moment watching her in amused silence, listening to her prattle of love and devotion. She was fresh from her own tubbing, her tall and shapely body draped in a kimono of black silk, an embroidered rose showing here and there in its soft folds. Her hair was a towering heap of loosely piled gold. Margie was but slightly clad, her delicate shoulders bare save for a little strip to which hung a filmy garment. Tommy, perhaps nine months old, gave himself joyfully to her caresses as she dried and powdered his sturdy little body.

"You get along very nicely with the little fellow, Margie," said her employer.

"Oh, yes ma'am." She turned quickly her cheeks flaming. "I didn't know you were there, ma'am. But you don't mind me carrying on over him, do you, ma'am?"

"Not a bit, Margie. I came in to tell you that my brother will be here tonight, and that tomorrow morning we are going for an automobile ride with a party of neighbors. The servants are to have a day off, and I shall want you to look out for the baby. Jimmy will be left home with you, and can take you for a ride in the runabout during the afternoon if it is very warm. My brother will come in his own car and bring his own chauffeur."

"Thank you, Mrs. Townsend. I'll take good care of Tommy."

"Keep the baby very quiet tonight," Mrs. Townsend instructed her. "Mr. Forrester wants silence when he comes to the country."

"Yes ma'am."

"And Margie," added Mrs. Townsend as she turned to leave the room, "when you

are through, you will find a package down in the hall. I ordered a dress and bonnet for you. If any changes are necessary, the seamstress will be here day after tomorrow, and she will make them for you."

"Oh, thank you, ma'am."

"And Margie!" Mrs. Townsend was well down the stairs to the second floor, where her boudoir was, and Margie had to dart to the balustrade in order to give a respectful response. "The dress is black, with lilac collar and cuffs—semi-mourning, you know."

"Anybody dead, ma'am?" the girl inquired fearfully.

"No," came back to her up the stairs. "But it was such a charming dress and such a great bargain, that I couldn't resist buying it for you."

A little puzzled, Margie returned to the baby, dressed him and sat in the gable window of her snug and prettily furnished room, staring over the tree-tops toward the orchard where a million peaches were hers for the taking. "I hope she isn't making a widow out of me before I'm even married," she sighed. The baby snuggled warmly and softly against her breast. From below she could hear Mrs. Townsend singing as her maid dressed her for the coming evening.

"I wonder what her brother looks like," she mused. "I hope he looks just like General Pershing. He must be very rich, coming in his own car with his own chauffeur. Oh, the dress!" She broke the spell of her dreaming, placed Tommy on the floor and flew from the room in quest of her gift.

SHE was back in a moment and in another moment was holding up a one-piece gown of the softest black silk, its somberness forever destroyed by the gayest of lilac collars and deep turned-back cuffs of the same color. She was breathless with delight. In another cardboard box was a bonnet, a thing truly adorable in its piquancy of cocked brim underlined with white silk. It was the work of an artist who was laughing at death when he made it. Her heart almost stopped beating as she thought that these pretty things would make her a lady. She laid them on her bed and was staring at them in sheer rapture when something hard struck the floor in the room near her. A tightly wrapped piece of paper lay near the bed, and as she picked it up a stone fell from it. It was

a note tossed into the window by Jimmy. "Slip over to the maple tree when they're at dinner," it read. "I got something important to tell you. Don't bring the kid; he might yell."

Margie studied it at the window and then looked about for signs of Jimmy, but he had taken himself away. Over the tree-tops, the eastern sky was taking on gold and purple as the sun sought its bed in the west, and from a cloud of fairy color the pale full moon was rising. Already the first bed-calls of the robins, sharp little summonses from mate to mate, sounded in branches close to her window-sill. Her thoughts were of the afternoon and the first kiss. She would go to him. The baby would close his little eyes soon after his supper and would sleep as he always did, like a little angel. She picked him up and kissed him. The beautiful bonnet and gown, which she had almost forgotten, again claimed her attention. She would wear them this very night, out in the moonlight, and wait for Jimmy under their tree. She sat down on the bed with Tommy in her arms and cried a little, for she was very happy.

#### CHAPTER IV

THE gown fitted her exquisitely, bringing out her slender, jonquil-like grace. Her mirror discovered for her many new delights in it that had not been visible to her eyes before, a charming little touch of blue in the knot at her waist, peeping out from the mourning silk like the first violet of spring; a suggestion of gayety was in the cut of the skirt, and this had not shown until she had it on and found that it tried in vain to caress her ankles; then too, the lilac collar seemed very deep and schoolgirlish because of the thinness of her shoulders; the loose, widening sleeves displayed her wrists, which were like the stems of lilies.

"I'm beautiful!" gasped Margie in astonishment. She held out her arms to her reflection as if in greeting to her new self. Then she tried on the bonnet confection of widowhood, and the picture of life and love triumphant over sorrow and death was perfected. From the white underlining of its brim, her brown hair, vibrant with youth, escaped in enticing tendrils. Her cheeks were poppies; her eyes violets.



Jimmy would be watching her window. She turned off the light to signal her coming. Save for the contented peep of a mother-bird hovering her fledglings in her nest close to the casement, the night was of velvet stillness. The shadows of the peach trees in the distant orchard were dark pools in a field of gold as the moon rode the starless heaven. She kissed her hand toward the garage and kissed it again to all the loveliness that lay before her grateful eyes, then turned from the window, reluctantly removed her bonnet and stepped from her room to the hall.

The floor below was dark. Leaning over the banisters and descending slowly, she found the way to the front porch clear. Mrs. Townsend and her brother were in the music-room. In a few moments she was outside and skirting the house in the shadows. She crouched low to escape the broad shaft of light sent from a deep French window and was directly under its lintel when Mrs. Townsend's voice from within startled her by its nearness. Fearful that she might be heard, she remained where she was.

"Oh, Margie is all right," her employer was telling her brother. "She is the best possible material." The girl's heart leaped with fresh gratitude.

"Then she isn't nosey?" asked Mr. Forrester. His voice was low and pleasing, but quite distinct.

"I think not. If she heard or saw anything that would make talk for the average servant, she wouldn't get it."

"Thick-headed?" Mr. Forrester laughed.

"Oh, no. It's simply that she doesn't know anything. Her little mind has been starved. I don't know whether she has any brains."

Margie felt vaguely troubled at this. Perhaps she wasn't bright enough for such grand company.

"Just a poor little orphan stick-in-the-mud," suggested Mr. Forrester.

"Exactly," agreed his sister to Margie's disgust. "But as she knows nothing, we will not have the trouble of unlearning her."

AS Mrs. Townsend moved away from the window, Margie hurried off to the maple tree in all her finery, half convinced that it was improper for such an ignorant young orphan to be thus bedighted. The tears of mortification were in her eyes when Jimmy, with a whispered exclamation

of surprise and delight, caught her to his breast.

"Where'd you get the gladsomes?" he asked, holding her off at arm's length.

"Mrs. Townsend gave them to me." There was hint of a sob in her voice.

"What's the matter? What's wrong?" he demanded, and then his lips came together in a white seam, and fire darted out of his sharp little blue eyes. His hands gripped her arms until they hurt. "Did Forrester say anything to you?" he asked.

"He said I was a stick-in-the-mud."

"Then he's seen you and talked with you!" She drew back from him, frightened, for his face was livid.

"No, Jimmy," she said. "I just heard them talking as I passed the window."

"You stopped to listen?" he asked uneasily.

"No, I couldn't help hearing," she replied truthfully.

"What else did you hear?"

"Only that I didn't have any brains." Her response was so childlike in its frankness that he laughed, and forgot the jealousy and apprehension that had stirred him. "Say, Margie," he said consolingly, "let's sit down here and talk it over. You aint the only orphan on this lot."

"I can't sit down, Jimmy," she told him regretfully. "I'm all dressed up."

"Well, if there ever was a kid!" he chuckled. "Come on by the garage door. There's a bench, and I'll wipe it off for you." She followed him obediently and let him put an arm about her, after seeing that his hand was clean.

"You said I wasn't the only orphan," she reminded.

"I'm one," he told her rather proudly.

"That's two of us."

"And Tommy, the baby, is one."

"That's thr—" Her brows wrinkled as she caught herself. How could a baby with a mother be an orphan?

"Jimmy," she sighed. "you're making fun of me. Tommy aint any orphan."

"He sure is," he said seriously. "You've been fooled like a lot of people. Mrs. Townsend adopted that little fellow, and she aint even Mrs. Townsend by name. She is Miss Townsend, but she likes to be called Mrs. Townsend and have people think Tommy is her own kid." He paused to let her take in all of this. She offered no comment.

"What you thinking about, Margie?" he asked after a long stretch of silence.

"I was thinking it's too bad we're all orphans in this place, Jimmy. And what's worse, here I am all dressed up like a widow, and I'm not even married yet, and carrying around a baby at that, like it was my own, for somebody else who makes believe it's hers. Say, Jimmy, I'm getting all mixed up. It's like playing let's pretend."

"But I aint so bad off, Marge," he offered. "I got an old aunt. She's a peach. She tried to bring me up, only I ran away and did the job myself. She was my father's twin sister, lives over in Jersey in a little cottage and raises chickens."

"Would she like me?" asked Margie.

"She'd love you to death, honey. She's that sweet and kind I've seen her make little coats for the chickens when the cold weather would come in the fall and catch them without any feathers on 'em."

"She must be grand."

"We'll go to live with her and spend the ten thousand dollars in the chicken-farm."

The moon came over the garage and robbed them of their friendly shadow as they sat with satisfied hearts unwinding the silken thread of their dreams of the future.

"Jimmy!" she cried, jumping to her feet. "The baby!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"It's late, and I might be locked out. Good-by—good night."

"I wont see you until tomorrow morning, honey," he pleaded.

"The baby, Jimmy! The baby! I got to go. Oh, Jimmy! Yes, I'll be ready and all dressed up five minutes after they're gone tomorrow." She stopped abruptly and looked into his face tragically.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I must take Tommy with us. Everybody will be away."

"Oh, Lord," he groaned.

"I'll not go without him."

"The baby goes. You win," Jimmy decided feebly as he turned into the garage to make his way to his lodging above. "Good night."

## CHAPTER V

FOR one in the *mi-carême* finery of widowhood, Margie made undignified haste between the garage and the house. She noticed that the lights downstairs were extinguished and was running

full tilt in the full clear light of the moon when from the shadows circling the base of the maple tree a figure in white stepped forth, a cigarette twinkled as it fell to the sward, and Mr. Forrester, tall, broad of shoulders, clad in flannels, stood in her way. She stopped dead in her tracks, like a frightened faun, as he lifted a gray silk cap from his head and bowed with old-fashioned exaggeration.

"I am at your service, madam, if you will be kind enough to command me." She recognized instantly his voice with its peculiar softness, its caressing quality in no way detracting from its carrying power. A smile played under the corners of a closely trimmed reddish-brown mustache, and as he raised his head, her own frightened violet eyes were caught by a searching glance of his deep-set gray ones. A thin and high-arched nose, between prominent cheek-bones beneath a narrow but shapely forehead, gave him the look of an eagle.

"If you have lost your way," he added, "perhaps I may be able to direct you." As he gradually realized the fullness of her youthful beauty and the unconscious grace with which she wore her modish gown, the little smile about his lips broadened into one of frank admiration.

"N-n-n-o sir," she managed to stammer. "I belong here."

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed. "My sister neglected to tell me that she had a guest. May I present myself? I am Mr. Forrester."

"Yes sir; thank you, sir." Her cheeks were furiously red in the bright moonlight as she struggled with her embarrassment. "No sir. I mean yes sir. I'm only Margie."

"Margie!" He looked his astonishment. "Tommy's nurse."

"Really!" He drew a gold cigarette-case from a coat pocket and walked with her around the house as he lighted it. "Came out for a quiet smoke before retiring," he explained. "It is too pleasant an evening to remain indoors." As she started up the steps of the front porch, he placed a shapely white hand ever so lightly on her arm. "Just a moment," he said, and she was puzzled, for his tone might have been taken to carry either suggestion or command. "I would like to ask you one or two things about yourself, Margie. My sister has retired. If you will walk with me as far as the road and back while I have my smoke."



"But the baby, sir."

"We shall hear him if he cries." She went with him, trying to keep a half-pace behind, but he maneuvered her out of this little vantage and she found herself strolling with the distinguished-looking gentleman farther and farther away from the house until she brought up determinedly at the brick pillars of the driveway. Across the wide, well-laid country road lay a field of buckwheat in full blossom, a lake of silver stirred by the night wind, the farther shore of which was a shadowy ridge of trees. He rested a hand on one of the pillars and looked down upon her at first thoughtfully and then with an eager expression which made Margie avert her eyes.

"MY sister told me that she had taken a girl from an orphan asylum," he said slowly, "but she led me to believe that she had chosen a poor drab little specimen."

"Yes sir. But I'm sure I could never hear the baby from here, Mr. Forrester. I must go back, sir."

"My dear girl!" His voice was as gentle as a father's. "My dear Margie, I know that you must have had no easy time of it in the orphan asylum, and I am sure that you will not have an easy time if you take up domestic service for the rest of your life. You are too pretty and too nice a girl for that, and my sister would have done far better to have taken you in as one of the family. At least she might have told me of your brightness and charm and given me a chance to help you. I have plenty of money, and it would be a delight to send you to a finishing school." He paused and stared off into the silver field, pondering his next approach to this lovely blossom of girlhood tossed in his path so suddenly. Faint patches of color came to the tightly drawn skin across the high cheek-bones. He was neither old nor young, as the gleam of white in his rather scant hair showed. "I would like to make a great and a beautiful lady of you, Margie," he continued. "Will you think it over?"

"Mr. Forrester, I must go, sir." She turned quickly and started back over the driveway to the house. The speed with which he reached her sent Margie's heart to her throat. It was as if a hawk had darted through the skies to its prey. "Now, don't be frightened," he said as he caught her by an arm. "It isn't polite

to run away when some one is talking to you. That is one of the things you must learn, my dear. Now, walk slowly and comfortably beside me." He still held her arm. At the porch he turned her so that she was compelled to face him. "I shall finish my cigarette alone," he said, his voice quavering a little. "You will find me very patient, Margie. Promise me that you will think of what I told you, that you will think of your own future." She could feel his hand tremble as he released her, and a glance into his keen blue eyes sent a chill over her. She darted within the house, and on tiptoe, to her room, where she closed and locked the door.

Her face was very white as she dropped into a chair. With a sharp pang in her breast she realized that she was no longer a child, for she had come not only to the knowledge of what she thought was love for a man, but also of fear of one. Her brain was spinning as she undressed and crept into bed. Out of the darkness the long, lean, distinguished countenance of Forrester seemed to watch her slightest movement; she could see his piercing eyes, and they held her with a dread fascination as she heard again his calm, easy bid to make her a great lady. Once she thought she heard the knob of her door tried, and she sat up in bed, stiff with fright. But if he had dared to follow her to her sanctuary, he had come and gone with the tread of a cat, for she waited long and in vain for another sound.

But tomorrow! The thought of the new day before her brought her peace that brought slumber. She and Jimmy would get the reward for the lost ring, their wedding-money. He could take her over to Aunt Mary's in Jersey, leave her there and bring Tommy back with him to this place so filled with strange happenings.

## CHAPTER VI

MR. WILKINS, of the firm of Walker, Peabody and Wilkins, who, as he pleasantly put it, took care of the rings and things of their wealthy clientele, laid aside Wigmore on "Principles of Judicial Proof" and presented a smiling countenance to his chief investigator as he entered his office high up over downtown New York.

"Good morning, Johnny Martin," he exclaimed in joyful greeting. "Pull up a

chair, and we'll have a good old-fashioned chat."

Johnny Martin obeyed with a boyish grin, balancing a light cane across the knees of his well-creased trousers and putting his straw hat on the desk of the lawyer. "Handsomer than ever, and groomed for an afternoon dance," laughed Mr. Wilkins, pushing a thin hand through his mass of white hair. "I only hope that this exceedingly capable thief who has been taking the pretty things of our clients is a woman and that she will live to set eyes on you. And if the thief is a woman and should fall under your spell, Johnny," continued the lawyer mischievously, "I'd even advocate your marrying her if by doing so you could put her where she would no longer be able to cut me out of my summer vacation."

"Excuse, please," protested Martin.

"Oh, but I could easily get a divorce for you after the job was done," chuckled Mr. Wilkins.

"Perhaps she wouldn't fall for me," suggested Martin.

"What! Not fall for you with those romantic brown eyes, the lean, fighting jaw, the square Pershing shoulders, the manly bosom and all that sort of thing, to say nothing of the line of talk I understand you always have at your disposal. Why, Johnny Martin!"

MR. WILKINS removed his old-fashioned gold-rimmed glasses, which was a sign that they would now get down to business. He sat in deep thought for a moment, the whir of an electric fan drowning the few faint street noises far below them. "There is of course a woman somewhere in this case, for there is one in every case," he declared finally. He lifted a typewritten sheet of paper from before him and gave it to Martin. "You will observe, Johnny," he said, "that in the list of summer robberies there has been in two cases a female guest that we have not been able to account for. Once she was a very pleasant widow with a young baby. Again she was one of the numerous tribe of war-workers, lecturing on her experiences at the front and not asking a cent of contribution for any cause, a most welcome guest, after all the big drives aimed at the wealthy."

"As a widow she was a brunette," reminded Martin, referring to the data given him, "but was a blonde as a lecturing lady from the front."

"Peroxide, Johnny. But beautiful to some extent, statuesque—not exactly an ox-eyed Venus, one might say, but a peroxide Venus, perhaps." Mr. Wilkins chuckled in huge delight at his own joke. "Now, then," he went on, "this mention of war brought to my mind the interesting fact that while we were doing our share in the great conflict, there was a complete cessation of jewel robberies between Bar Harbor and Palm Beach. The year before we entered the war, our clients were robbed right and left. As soon as we began to demobilize and get interested in trans-Atlantic flights, politics and murders, once more the raids were resumed. Mrs. Tavel's beautiful blue diamond has disappeared; Mrs. Bronson's pearl necklace is gone; Mrs. DeWitt's famous gold dinner service, except for two or three pieces, has probably long been melted down for the fence; and from every fashionable summer colony the complaints come over my telephone or the telegraph wire to hold me here when I should be up at Cape Ann having a nice quiet time with my family."

"The thief, the real big gun, was caught in the draft, do you think, Mr. Wilkins?" asked Martin.

"He may have been, Johnny. But this work has been done and is being done so cleverly that I feel sure a wise and an old head directs it. The first draft would not have caught him, and perhaps the second draft might not have. The third draft, which called for men up to forty-five, was not used. But he might have volunteered and sent his lady-love into retirement while he gave his services to his country, which country might have well desired him in jail instead of in uniform. You will admit that our man may have volunteered?"

"Yes, indeed," Martin replied. "There was a burglar arrested last week in Harlem who wore the Croix de Guerre with two palms, and he hadn't stolen it, either. We took into the fighting in France some of the ablest pickpockets, gunmen and crooks of the city—couldn't help it. And oh, boy, didn't they fight!"

"Just the rough-neck class," mused Mr. Wilkins.

"But there were others," Johnny Martin informed him. "Before Château Thierry our divisional headquarters was hard up for information as to the strength and disposition of the enemy, and there was a call for volunteers for raiding parties. I got a job with one of them and



was turned over to a Captain Sutherland. He had been loaned to us by the Canadians to instruct in that sort of work. General Currie, their corps commander, picked him out himself as his best intelligence officer, I understand."

"Was he a crook?"

"If not, he had the makings of a world beater in him. He was a fox and a tiger at the same time. He was the guy that crept across No Man's Land and put an alarm clock under the parapet of Heinie's trench one night. He had it set so that every two minutes it would give just a single tap—one of those big hall-boy get-ups, you know. Heinie couldn't dope it out, and the whole bunch on the other side was jumpy until a German officer crawled over to investigate, fearing a new sort of mine. He never crawled back. Sutherland brought him in. He didn't even muss his uniform. He could walk through an overstocked crockery shop in pitch dark and never touch a saucer, and he could send his long, powerful fingers to a human throat in the same sort of a place and never jiggle a thing."

"An artist in murder?"

"All of that and carry eight," laughed Martin. "He was the most fascinating and at the same time the most coldly cruel man I met on the other side, and I worked almost entirely in the Intelligence Service after volunteering for the first raid with him. When he brought that spick-and-span officer into the lines, we began to pump him for what he might know, but got nothing. The young Heinie seemed hopeless, but Captain Sutherland never gave up. He furnished him a comfortable room all by himself and kept his old alarm clock wound up and set so that it would give that same one tap every two minutes, night and day. It got on the nerves of the prisoner, and he couldn't sleep after a while."

"The Captain, who must have been well up in the championship records for fancy pistol work, was apparently looking over his gat one day as he chatted pleasantly with his man. The lieutenant was smoking a cigarette. The gun went off suddenly and knocked the butt out of his mouth. Another time, late at night, the prisoner, unable to sleep, determined to make a break for liberty if he could. He found the door of his room unlocked. He passed through it to another room at the further

end of which he could see a white door-knob in the darkness. He was about to put his hand on it and try it when it flew off. Sutherland used his own pistol, carrying a Maxim silencer for better work within the German trenches."

"Did he get what he wanted?"

"Yes."

"Pretty smooth, I would say."

"The smoothest that ever lived, and we used to say his tongue was in his shoe and his shoe was tied. He got the D. S. O. before he came over to help us, but he never wore the ribbon. And he brought me in on his back after I'd bungled the job a bit one night."

"The time you got it through the lungs, Johnny?"

"Yes. And after we'd made the push, he came back to the base hospital and spent a half-day with me. I asked him what'd he do after the war for excitement, and he smiled and bored me with his cold gray eyes. He liked me, and he seemed to want to make me a proposition, but he didn't. I sure liked him, although I could have taken my oath he was a crook. I'm going to look him up in the gallery at headquarters some day and try to find him and thank him for getting me out of that hell-hole I was in."

"That's all very romantic, Johnny Martin; but still—" began Mr. Wilkins when a slight buzz at the telephone on his desk interrupted him. He listened keenly, grunted once and hung up. "The Tavel diamond has arrived," he informed his young sleuth, pulling out an old-fashioned gold watch, the chasing worn smooth by two generations of use. "Ten thousand dollars reward and no questions asked." He smiled broadly. "It is half-past two, Johnny Martin, and all the banks are closed, but I have the money for the lady: it's a lady waiting outside, a young lady, evidently a widow, with a baby in her arms. Of course I can't ask her any questions, but if you'll just step behind that screen there, it might help. Crossman tells me on the phone he sent one of Jim Tierney's men to the street to find out whether she came in a machine and to see whether he can spot the chauffeur. If the plans are laid for a quick get-away, we'll nail the man at the wheel before we turn over the money to the intermediary."

As Martin slipped behind the screen, straw hat and cane in hand, Mr. Wilkins picked up the telephone receiver and said

in his most matter-of-fact tone: "Send in the lady, please."

## CHAPTER VII

WITH one of Tommy's plump arms about her neck, Margie stood on the threshold of Mr. Wilkins' sanctum, a picture of charming young motherhood. The room was bright and cheerful as Mr. Wilkins himself. A vase of pink roses stood on a little table near a sunlit window beyond which the inner harbor of New York lay in the dazzling afternoon sunlight, many tugs and ferry-boats drawing broad bands of silver across it between the Battery and Staten Island. The rug covering the floor was Persian, with a blithesome blending of soft old pink and pale blue shadows. On the lawyer's desk were many pretty things of silver and morocco, gifts of his children. As he rose and placed a chair for Margie near his desk, smiling in most fatherly fashion, Tommy's happily wondering eyes took him in from head to foot and approved him.

"Goo!" exclaimed Tommy in approval, waving his disengaged hand at Mr. Wilkins.

"Goo to you!" replied Mr. Wilkins with a laugh that was genuine.

Through the painted screen of gauze, so built that one behind it could see everything that transpired in the room without being seen, Johnny Martin held his breath and assured himself that he could inform the universe that Margie was a peach, a flowering almond-tree in full bloom, a lily of the valley, a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

"I saw your ad. in the paper," said Margie faintly as she reached down under the lilac collar of her semi-mourning bargain.

"Pray be seated," said Mr. Wilkins. "The little one must be heavy."

Tommy was certainly heavy, and the kindness of the old gentleman's face and voice lured her. She took the chair and pushed in place the tendrils of dark hair that had been pulled loose by her beloved little charge. Tommy writhed and twisted until his little feet touched the pretty rug.

"It's all right," Mr. Wilkins assured Margie. "I'm used to children."

"Waugh!" cried Tommy in anger as Margie still held to his chubby fists.

"He wants to play on the rug," the lawyer chuckled. "Here's a booful for mom-

mer's precious." He leaned over and gave the child a cunningly constructed silver paperweight, a miniature cathedral, in which were hung tiny silver bells, a vest-pocket carillon the music of which entranced the child. "Oops!" gasped Tommy in delight as he took it with a melodious wave. "Wups!" he announced gravely as he put it to his mouth and tasted it.

"Now, then," began Mr. Wilkins taking up the business in hand, "I believe you have the diamond ring we advertised for."

MARGIE became frightened, and her blue eyes became dilated. Jimmy had told her to answer no questions, further than to say, if pressed hard, that the ring had been picked up in the road in Westchester by a friend who needed the reward.

"The advertisement said there wouldn't be any questions," she stammered. It already seemed that she had been away four or five hours from the protecting and encircling arm of Jimmy.

"That is correct," Mr. Wilkins assured her, "and I shall ask none. I have the reward for you, but of course I must be sure that you have brought the right ring. It will only take a few moments under a microscope to identify it properly. Will you let me see it, please?"

She opened a tightly clenched hand and extended it to him, the diamond with all its beauty and light and color vying in vain with the beauty of her eyes. He took it and scrutinized it for what seemed hours.

"If you don't mind," Mr. Wilkins apologized as he rose from his desk, "I'll have it examined under the glass. It will only take a minute. You see, it is the custom of those who possess such expensive jewels to have the lapidary place on them secret marks for identification in case of loss or theft." He paused to rub Tommy's white poll as he crossed the room and left it, closing the door softly behind him.

Crossman was waiting for him with a detective from the agency of James Tierney, Incorporated, with offices on the floor below.

"Well?" asked Mr. Wilkins, all his suavity and smiles gone.

"They're crooks!" said Crossman.

"I recognized the chauffeur, but he piped me first, slid out of the seat and was lost in the crowds before I could even pull my gat," explained the detective.

"Well, what about the license-number?" demanded Mr. Wilkins a bit testily.



"I got headquarters right off from the cigar-stand. The owner is a Mrs. Townsend of Westchester," replied the detective.

"Get a couple of men up there quick and arrest the whole works." Mr. Wilkins had rid himself of the charm of Margie and the baby and was attending strictly to business. The chime of the carillon paper-weight beyond his office door recalled Tommy to mind. Margie didn't look like a thief or a companion of thieves. "Wait a second." His brow furrowed in thought; he stood pondering the probability of bringing harm to the two unjustly. "Don't arrest anybody at the Townsend house until you're sure of what you're doing. I'll have this girl followed. Johnny Martin will attend to that. He's behind the screen in there. That's all."

There was no necessity of putting the diamond under the microscope. It was the Tavel ring. He had often warned the owner not to leave it carelessly about while at her toilet. He knew it as well as he knew his smooth old watch.

Back at his desk Mr. Wilkins beamed on Margie and thanked her for having brought the right ring. "You are fortunate to have found it," he said, taking a long thin wallet from his inside coat pocket. "The reward is quite a tidy sum, and I presume that you have lost your husband, Madam."

"My husband!" gasped Margie, and then remembering the baby and the semi-mourning, she smiled, in her innocence, like a May morning, instead of pulling a long countenance and said: "Oh, yes." He waited in the hope of some bit of information slipping from her, but none came. Her little white hand was extended to him for the money. From the wallet he drew a single certificate, one that had never been used before. It was a ten-thousand-dollar bill.

Margie stared at it dumfounded. She had expected a large bag of money or a roll as big as a girl of her size could manage to carry.

"Is that it?" she asked.

Mr. Wilkins nodded.

"It's all there on this piece of paper?"

"Any bank will change it for you."

Her hands trembled violently as she folded the ten-thousand-dollar bill, tucked it far down under the lilac collar and proceeded to corral her joyful fellow-orphan. As she released the pretty tinkling office bauble from his hands, Tommy's face became crimson, his round throat swelled, his

rather wide mouth became elastic and stretched to the width and depth of a Jack Johnson shell-hole.

"Let him keep it!" cried Mr. Wilkins, heading off the shriek.

A great sob instead of a howl was his reward from the child as the little hands again clutched the paper-weight. With a silvery wake of sound from the little bells, Margie hurried from the room as Johnny Martin stepped from the screen and darted through another door to the corridor to follow her over any trail she might choose.

## CHAPTER VIII

AT the bottom of the cañon called Nassau Street, Margie found herself one of a million or more of antlike creatures, all the females appared gayly, all the males dashing wildly north and south over the sidewalks and between the curbs, one moment striving breathlessly to save a second of time and the next pulling up abruptly before a shop window to stare for seeming hours as if fascinated at a display of suspenders or socks, bathing-suits or sporting goods or to crowd eagerly about some workman mending a door-knob.

There was no sign of Jimmy or the car. Two of the Tierney detectives had commandeered the motor and were well on their way to Westchester and the home of Mrs. Townsend. People bumped into her, turned to scowl and snarl, looked their astonishment when they perceived Tommy waving his bauble, the music of which fell in the city's roar more lightly than rain ever fell in the fields of Flanders during a strafing, smiled their apologies and rushed on. Once she was almost knocked over. A steady hand caught her and held her and the baby above the myriad feet. Then she was drawn back against the wall of the towering office-building. Johnny Martin turned his head quickly as she gasped her thanks. He would have avoided being uncovered as a shadow but for the wild swoop which Tommy made with his silver plaything. It struck the young investigator on the left cheek, the sharp silver edge cutting into the flesh and drawing blood. "Goop!" shouted Tommy enthusiastically as the little carillon tinkled in Martin's ears. "Hell's bells," groaned the young man, clapping an immaculate handkerchief to his face.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" cried Margie. "Your face is cut!" Above the cambric she saw Johnny's soulful brown eyes under the clear-cut eyebrows and between long lashes a movie hero would have envied. There was no longer a chance of avoiding contact with his "subject," as the professional term describes a person under shadow. She took the handkerchief from his hand and gently dabbed his face with it, while inwardly he cursed his luck and wondered with a queer little thrill how such a sweet little girl-mother ever got mixed up in a diamond robbery.

"Bad baby! Bad Tommy!" reproached Margie as she made these ministrations.

"It's all right," he assured her. "Don't worry."

THERE was no use in ducking back to cover now. There was a pleasant little edge of huskiness in his voice, and when his eyes lighted with mirth over the ridiculousness of the situation, in which he had been knocked out professionally by one punch from an infant, she could not help but smile back at him. The incident drew a crowd immediately. It was far more fascinating than any window-display of suspenders in chrome and gamboge tints and silver buckles. Tommy, in fact, made it a classic event, for a healthy, boisterous baby in the financial district is about as rare as a sunflower in a window-box and consequently just about as conspicuous.

A rotund stock-broker with watery eyes and closely clipped white mustache chucked the infant under the chin, and a stenographer perched on high pin-heels like a thrush about to take flight, gave him a kiss on a fat cheek and whispered: "Mommer's booful boy!" Tommy did his share toward increasing the audience by lamming her on the brow. A roar of laughter brought a huge cop, who prodded the crowd with his stick, breaking it into squads and shooing each squad away.

"Now, what's all the trouble?" he boomed affably like a blue mountain that had been suddenly given voice. Margie looked up at him. "I'm lost, Mister," she said.

"Where do you want to go?" Margie's face blanched. Her address or any hint of where she lived had been made taboo by Jimmy. Jimmy had told her that never mind what might happen, she was not to let anyone know the name of her employer

or anything about her or herself. "I'm a stranger in the city," she replied. "I came in a machine, but it's gone. We came from the country."

"I'll get a taxi for you." The cop turned and brushed the ants aside. A taxi would just about spoil Johnny Martin's last chance of keeping in touch with the young woman. The nearest machines for hire were two blocks away to the south, parked between the Stock Exchange and the comparatively small building where the Morgan money works continuously like wine in ferment. He dared not leave her.

"Perhaps I can lend you a hand," he offered. "I have lots of time and know the city well. I live here."

The offer was a godsend, and besides, Margie thought she had never seen so handsome a young man, nor one so well groomed or with such a pleasant voice. Although the afternoon was piping hot and the people now flowing steadily by her again were panting and dripping with perspiration, he seemed cool despite the scratch on his face, already healing under the pressure of his handkerchief.

"Here's the taxi, Lady."

"Oh, thank you."

Martin drew a card from a thin silver case and showed it to the policeman. It was his license as a special detective, and bore the name of the firm of Townsend, Peabody and Wilkins. The cop nodded, and the young man helped Margie and the baby into the machine and got in with them.

"Uptown," said Johnny Martin. "We'll go have a cup of tea, and after a little rest I'll send you on your way home," he added, turning to Margie. To himself he gave his unfailing word: "Maybe!"

## CHAPTER IX

IT was fairyland and nothing else to which Margie's cavalier took her and the infant. Although the sun was shining brightly outside, the tea-room of the hotel on Park Avenue was rich in velvet shadows where tiny lights shone on each little table through petticoats of amethyst, gold, emerald, turquoise. As her young eyes became accustomed to the change, she made out bits of white lattice work with roses entwined, graceful palms and in the center a fountain playing idly in a circle of rushes and little floating islands, lily-



pads. At a word from Martin the head-waiter summoned a varlet who returned in a few moments with a high chair for Tommy, who, as soon as he found himself at the proper level of high life, banged the table with his tinkling ornament and called the meeting to order.

Little cakes were served with the tea, marvelous things, pretty enough for the decoration of a summer girl's best bonnet, filled with delicious creamy material that melted in one's mouth. There were many exquisitely dressed women about them, but Margie in lilac and black, the excitement of the moment crimsoning her cheeks and lending new fire to her blue eyes, was lovelier than any of them. The chubby youngster by her gave her a wonderful stamp of reality, a genuinely human touch, the blessed aura of motherhood which the others did not possess. They were like painted sticks with a bit of tow glued to their tops. Nor did the merry little bells of his toy and the occasional barbaric yawps of Tommy detract from this advantage of the seeming girl-widow.

A tiny bit of a lad in a green and gold uniform passed near their table droning out: "Mister Walker! Mister Walker! Telephone for Mr. Walker!" It brought Margie from her deep and rosy cloud. By this time Jimmy ought to be home. She had no idea how to reach the Westchester house, but she did know the telephone number, and Jimmy would come after her or tell her how to get back.

"Could I use the telephone, please?" she asked Martin.

"Certainly. I'll show you the booth. There's one near the entrance." He rose with her, asking their waiter to keep an eye on the baby.

"Shall I get the number for you?" he asked as they stood beside the girl at an embowered switchboard.

"I'll get it through for the lady," said the operator with a smile for their youth. "Take Booth Ten, please."

As Margie closed the door behind her, Martin leaned over the operator and whispered quickly: "Cut me in on her wire, please. It's all right. No harm will be done. Just a little surprise, you know." He gave her his most winning smile as he laid beside her hand a folded ten-dollar certificate.

"Take Fifteen," she told him.

After a few moments' waiting, he heard Central say: "There's Westchester."

Then followed this conversation:

"Is that Mrs. Townsend's house?"

"Yes."

"May I speak with her?"

"She aint here. She's been pinched.

I'm only the constable from the village left to watch the place."

"Pinched?"

"Yep. Arrested—put in the coop. She's a crook. They're all crooks in this layout."

A gasp from Margie.

"Is there a young man named Jimmy there?"

"He's in the coop too, but the big fellow, the head of the gang, got away. Who are you?"

MARGIE hung up, and Johnny Martin darted from the booth and back to the operator's desk. He knew that many an angel face hid a wicked heart in this big town of his, but the young investigator could not bring himself to believe that this sweet girl with her baby was a thief. Her face was whiter than any of the lily-pads in the fountain basin of the tea-room, and as he escorted her back to their table, a glance showed him the tears she was fighting so bravely to keep back. Tommy afforded her a few moments in which to get control of herself, for the youngster had helped himself to the plate of goodies, and his face was masked in daubs of many colors.

"Are you in trouble?" He laid a hand ever so gently on one of hers.

"It's time for his nap," she said, bewildered at the turn of affairs. "And all this sweet stuff will give him a pain. He'll be sick."

"Can I be of any help to you?"

"I've got to find somewhere to live." Two tears trembled on her lashes and fell to her cheeks. This young man was the only person in all the wide world to whom she could turn. "I don't know what to do," she said simply, wiping away the tears. "If I didn't have the baby, it wouldn't be so bad. Something's happened, something terrible. I can't tell you about it. But I've got to find a room somewhere. I have plenty of money but no friends."

"You have a friend, although I don't even know your name."

"My name's Margie—Margie Leroy."

"My name's Martin, John Martin."

"Pleased to meet you," she said in imitation of Mrs. Townsend.

HE paid the bill, and with Tommy on Margie's arm, they went to the hotel office. Martin showed his business card and explained that the lady, Mrs. Leroy, was his sister. They were in town from Westchester for the evening to meet some friends passing through the city from the South. They would like connecting rooms. Their baggage would be along later. He gave Mr. Wilkins as a reference, writing out on a blank card the name and telephone number of his club.

"The custom is to pay in advance when there is no baggage," said the clerk as Johnny registered for Margie and himself. "The rooms are six dollars apiece."

Margie slipped her hand in her bosom and calmly laid the only money she had on the desk before the clerk. He smoothed out the bill, stared at it with dropping jaw and pushed it gently back to her.

"It's the smallest I have," said Margie.

"What's the trouble?" asked Johnny, staring at the pallid face of the man behind the desk. "Oh, perhaps I have some smaller bills." He made Margie take back her money and opened a well-filled wallet.

"Pardon me, Mr. Martin," apologized the clerk. "Please don't bother about it now. Wait until you are ready to check out. If the baggage doesn't arrive by evening, shall I have our shopper call at Mrs. Leroy's rooms?" He replaced the keys to the six-dollar rooms and handed a single key to the waiting bell-boy, whose keen eyes had gotten one soul-filling glimpse of the ten-thousand-dollar certificate. "I think these rooms will please you better. It will be a warm night. It's just a little family suite on the top floor, with a glimpse of both rivers."

"Thanks," replied Martin with a smile.

"And should you need any money, just telephone the cashier."

As the young man and woman and the infant departed in the wake of the brightly liveried lad, the clerk sank to his stool behind the desk and whispered to himself. 'And still they come. I guess their daddy made it selling cootie-powder or rat-traps to the bunch in the trenches.'

## CHAPTER X

A MAID brought to Margie's dressing-room a toilet set of gold, a wrapper of damask silk, slippers that seemed made of eider down, and gar-

ments for the baby. In his own part of the suite Martin, shading his voice to a whisper, talked with Mr. Wilkins for a moment, and that kindly old gentleman informed him that he would be right up to the hotel.

Margie, a little dazed at the sudden realization that in New York money not only talked but also laughed and sang, and that she possessed ten thousand of the magic dollars, made herself comfortable after the baby was tucked away in a bed with rose-colored draperies. The maid, by direction of the hotel manager, had brought her the latest novel, a love story that got away in the first paragraph of the first chapter with a sprightly hop, skip and a jump. Fears about her future disappeared. Her only concern was about the fate of the hero in the book.

Downstairs, as she lingered in her new-found dreamland, Mr. Wilkins was informing his debonair agent of the events that had transpired in Westchester.

"They are the people we want," he declared. "Mrs. Townsend, who was a weekend guest of the Tavels, stole the ring. In turn the lad Jimmy stole it from her. He is turning State's evidence, and if he loosens up good and plenty, we'll give him another chance. The man we want is one Forrester, sometimes known as Silent Forrester, the cleverest and most successful thief that ever lived, who has operated on both sides of the Atlantic. He is the chap responsible for the loss of the rings and things of my clients."

"Is there a picture of him in the gallery?" asked Johnny.

"No. And of course there was none in the Westchester house. We've got to reach him through the little girl upstairs."

"You think he will try to find her?"

"A pretty face is his only weakness," says Jimmy, his chauffeur and second-story man."

"Well," sighed Johnny, a little added color coming to his cheeks, "I'll say she has a pretty face."

"We'll put personals in the morning papers," Mr. Wilkins informed him. "I'll attend to that from my club. We'll let him know where she is. Perhaps he'll try to reach her. Then we'll nab the gentleman. But Johnny Martin, in the meantime, don't you let Margie give you the slip."

"She can't shake me," he assured the lawyer with a blush. "Of course, she'll



want that ten-thousand-dollar bill changed, and I'll see that she doesn't get it changed. She hasn't got a nickel for a subway ticket or a dime for a sandwich, and the baby must eat."

"Protector of widows and orphans!" chuckled Mr. Wilkins. "What are you going to do with her tonight?"

"Take her to a show—leave the baby with a maid. I don't think she ever saw the inside of a theater. She's almost primitive, but plenty bright enough. The love for her baby is about the only thing she knows about."

"Her baby?" laughed Mr. Wilkins. "Why, that kid was only a part of the Forrester layout, to give respectability to his Westchester plant. They bought it at some infant farm and then dug up Margie from an orphan asylum to lug it around and keep it from bawling its young head off."

"That so?"

"Of course, she was never married, although her rig is that of a young widow, and having the baby along, amply carried out the suggestion that the child was her own."

"Geel!" sighed Johnny. "With that outfit and the ten-thousand-dollar bill, she could stroll through Wall Street and pick up anywhere from five to ten million in an afternoon. I guess this Forrester crook was intending to train her in his business. She'd be a gold mine."

"He'll never give her up without a struggle," Mr. Wilkins declared. "With her absolute innocence, her beauty and his brains back of her, they could make any of the remaining kings in Europe call a soviet, turn over the whole works to it and flee to some charmingly sequestered cottage in pursuit of the butterfly called love."

"I'll say they could," Johnny agreed. Mr. Wilkins rose after a glance at his watch. "Give her a good time, Johnny—the bright and gay sort of amusement, lots of it; and if she falls in love with you, it will be all right. I've left word with the hotel manager to send all the bills down to my office and to let you have anything you want. Go the limit. We are going to land Silent Forrester if we have to spend five or ten times ten thousand dollars."

"I'll do my best," Martin assured his employer as they said good-by.

"There's only this one thing you must

watch out for," added Mr. Wilkins: "Forrester is a man of brains, but his boy Jimmy says that when his eyes go cold, a human life means nothing to him. He's a killer. Don't let him get you in a corner, Johnny. You have your gun with you?"

"Sure."

"Good night."

"Good night."

## CHAPTER XI

THE swift transition from an orphan asylum within the city to ease and a million peaches, a baby, fine clothes and a young man in a pleasant country, the sudden shift to a still higher if more artificial plane, which landed her in a splendid hostelry with ten thousand dollars, the baby still with her, servants at her back, a wonderful evening at the theater with a wonderful young man—all this made Margie pinch herself a number of times as she prepared for bed shortly after midnight.

An occasional thought of Jimmy in the coop somewhere up in Westchester intruded. Jimmy had been very kind to her and would have married her and provided a genuine last name for her if that blue diamond had not come into his life to tempt him. And yet, if the diamond had not popped up as it had, she might now be in jail along with the others instead of being where she was, before a triple mirror, combing her hair with a gold mounted comb, the baby peacefully in bed behind her. The thought of Tommy being safe comforted her. It would have been terrible if he had been left in the hands of the police, who would not know when and how to give him his bath and his food.

Another thought made her get up and go to her door and assure herself that it was locked. Leaving the theater, she had felt that some one was staring hard at her from behind. Many a man that evening had cast her an admiring glance, which she had accepted calmly as another pleasant gift in her fool's paradise. But the feeling of this particular stare from behind made her nervous. She had turned and had caught a glimpse of a tall and rather stately gentleman, but he had turned away his face so swiftly that it was impossible for her to assure herself that he was the one who had been boring holes in the back

of her neck. Yet something about what she did see of him made her think of the eagle-like man in flannels who had caught her in the moonlight only the night before and had talked so softly about making a great and beautiful lady of her. Could it have been Forrester? Of course not. He was hiding from the police. Then again it might have been him, for he was not of the kind to run away as Jimmy had.

"I give it up," she decided as she went to the bed wherein the adorable infant lay like a flower carelessly dropped amid the lace and linen finery. "I guess I'll say my 'Now I lay me'" she sighed, and fell to her knees, her pretty face between her hands.

Whether it was a direct inspiration given her in answer to her simple prayer for protection or just one of those puzzling premonitions which psychologists pass by as beyond their understanding, Margie, instead of turning into bed, sat down to a little desk with thin, ornate legs, dipped the fresh pen into a silver ink-well and laboriously spelled out this note:

In case of accident to Margie Leroy, please send Baby to St. Brigid's Orphan Asylum and ask Annie Phelan to care for him until she hears from me if alive. If dead to use the money to educate Tommy. He is an orphan too. Send him to Yale.

The hero of her first novel had been a square-jawed Yale man, and that was enough to satisfy Margie. She blotted the sheet, pinned her ten-thousand-dollar certificate to it, folded it and in turn pinned it to Tommy's little undershirt. They were all orphans, Annie, Tommy and herself. They had a common tie and would stand together. It was not bad reasoning. She switched off the light and crept close to the beloved carillon ringer, whose toy lay on the other side of his pillow.

## CHAPTER XII

JOHNNY MARTIN, late of the Intelligence Service of the A. E. F., saw Margie's light vanish from the glazed transom of his bedroom in the profiteer suite and smiled as he thought of her trustfulness. The hours had been golden to him. No woman he had met had combined such childish charm with so much beauty. He decided that an orphan asylum was a good place to raise a girl. No thought of evil seemed to have a place in

her mind. That she had all but kissed him in return for the happiness she had experienced during the evening had brought to him no feeling of which he could have felt ashamed. Rather it made him experience a sense of responsibility. He had ever been a clean youngster, and her faith in him made his thrill of happiness deeper and purer.

It was one o'clock when he laid his automatic beside the telephone on the little table close to his bed, turned out his light and hopped in. He would need the sleep, for tomorrow night Forrester might be nosing around. Mr. Wilkins was no alarmist, and when he said that they were dealing with a dangerous crook, he realized that until their man was snug in the Tombs, he would have to walk softly and with both eyes open.

He was beginning to doze when there came a single tap from the telephone instrument. A heavy vibration from a subway train, the violent closing of a door near the exchange-board might have caused it. Not being sure whether he had been asleep, Johnny turned on the reading light set in the head of his bed and looked at his watch. It was thirty-two minutes past one.

Martin was dozing again when—  
*Pling!*

He awakened with a start. "Damn that telephone," he groaned. He found himself wide awake and sat up, rubbing his head for a moment, turning on the light and looking at his watch almost unconsciously. It was thirty-four minutes past one. Margie's room was dark. The key to the connecting door was on her side. If peril threatened or illness in the night came, all she had to do was to turn it, and he would be at her side. One little cry from her bed would be enough, for he had the key to her room from the corridor. He pounded his pillows viciously and tried again to go to sleep. Twice sixty seconds had passed when the tap again came from the telephone. It brought Martin out of bed like a suddenly released spring. He picked up the instrument and jiggled the bracket in a hurry call for Central. The seconds dragged to a minute, and he suffered the full impatience of a telephone subscriber who had seen better days of wire service. Another half-minute passed.

"Hello. That will be all right, sir. Am sorry, sir, but the long-distance was working badly all evening." The voice sounded



from a far distance. It was evident that his wire was crossed with that of some other guest in the hotel. He smothered his feelings and waited. "How is your daughter tonight?" "Not very well. It's too hot in the city. If she doesn't go to sleep in another hour, I'll take her out of town. The car is waiting." The conversation was not interesting.

MARTIN hung up, and as he did so, the instrument mocked him with another single silver note. He threw himself in bed and once more turned out his light. Two minutes passed and again:

*Pling!*

"It's awful!" groaned the tortured investigator. "It's awful." With the greatest care he lifted the receiver and listened. No sound came over the wires. Neither did Central respond. He waited patiently a full minute, and then the gooseflesh began to form on his body as he recalled the similar torture given the young German officer captured by his Intelligence chief on the other side. Was Captain Sutherland the man who had been directing the theft of the rings and things of the clients of his firm? Was Sutherland sending him a warning to lay off the hunt? He dropped the receiver back to its nickel arm and decided that just two more taps would answer those questions. As he waited, he slipped hurriedly into his clothes, and as he was tying his shoe-laces, the bell sounded. He slipped his gun into his right-hand coat pocket and drew down the shades of his windows so that he was in pitch darkness, a fighting advantage.

The second tap determined him that Sutherland and Silent Forrester were the same. He groped his way to the telephone instrument and began violently calling for Central. The voice of a sleepy girl finally answered: "Numbuh pleeze?"

"This is Mr. Martin talking."

"Yes sir."

"My wire has been crossed with that of another guest, a gentleman with a daughter who is ill. Could you connect me with him?"

"What's his name?"

"Either Sutherland or Forrester."

After a long wait he was informed that there was no such person in the hotel.

"The party I want was using the long-distance only a couple of minutes before," he told her. "Let me talk with him, please."

"I couldn't do that, sir. I'd get fired. He pays for his privacy."

"But it is important, and if you're fired, I'll see that you get a better job."

"Sorry."

"Then will you give me the manager?"

"No sir. No one is allowed to disturb him after one o'clock."

Martin tried the lure of the fat tip.

"Would ten dollars interest you? No? Fifty? A hundred?"

"A hundred?" came to him in a little gasp.

"Yes. A hundred."

"Will you pay me that if I get you in touch with him?"

"Yes."

"Well, I can't call his room, but I can tell you that he will be at the cashier's desk almost any moment. He is leaving, with his daughter."

"Thanks." Martin switched on his light, pulled his automatic from his pocket, looked it over carefully, slipped it back, and opening and closing his door softly, stepped to the corridor on his way to face any sort of trouble that might come along.

### CHAPTER XIII

AS the elevator door clicked behind Martin, a lean and distinguished-looking gentleman, carrying on his arm a woman's cloak, slipped from the room opposite the one in which Margie and Tommy slept. A forged master-key admitted him. In a few moments he emerged, carrying that young lady well bundled in his arms, a faint odor of chloroform trailing them as he hurried with her in the direction of a distant elevator which ended not in view of the hotel office, but near a discreet side entrance to the hotel used mostly by wealthy patrons who engaged their apartments by the year.

A limousine of expensive model, its powerful engine running silently, was at the curb. In another moment the tall gentleman and his ill daughter were gone.

"He was the best tipper ever hit this dump," said the doorman to the elevator boy. "And I hope he comes back soon."

"He gimme ten," said the youth from the gilded cage with a grin. "Guess there aint any more change coming tonight."

"There might be." The doorman pointed a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the office. "I went in for a

glass of water just this minute, and a young fellow was hanging around, nervous as a cat. I think he's the guy they've been telling about, the one with ten-thousand-dollar bills for small change and a girl with a baby on the twenty-third floor. They might be getting ready to leave."

The young fellow, pacing noiselessly the rich rugs, keeping a watchful eye on the main elevator doors, was undoubtedly nervous, for he was questioning himself whether it had been advisable to leave his charges even on a chance of getting the drop on his former captain. His right hand was in his pocket. Another question came to his mind to add to his uneasiness. If the guest who had managed to cross wires with him was the gatherer of rings and things he was after, then the telephone girl was in his employ, just as one had been in his when he had eavesdropped on Margie during the afternoon before. If she was, he reasoned with unconscious accuracy, then he had been stalled.

A sudden panic came over him, and he reentered the waiting elevator and was taken to his floor. The transom over Margie's door was dark, the corridor deserted. He would have passed into his own room with peace of mind somewhat restored but for a very faint odor that came to his nostrils as he stood hesitantly between the two doors. He recognized it instantly, and his heart stopped beating. His professional interest seemed lost forever under a flood of emotion. Could it be that she had been taken away from him, this girl whose freshness of beauty and charm of innocence had, in the twinkling of an eye, taken his heart by storm?

WITH a hand that trembled, Johnny slipped the key into Margie's door and entered, touching the electric button at the right of the lintel and flooding the room with light. The baby stirred in his sleep and reached for his silver toy. The door to the bathroom was open. Her clothes lay, folded neatly, over the backs of chairs; her stockings hung over the foot of the bed, her little shoes beneath them.

"Margie!" he whispered. "Margie, my God! Margie!" The window curtains were drawn. There had been no suicide. She had been stolen. The sob that escaped him awakened Tommy, who seized his carillon and tested it without delay. His eyes becoming used to the light, he

made out the dejected friend of his orphan foster-mother. "Glub!" said Tommy fatuously.

"She's gone! Stolen!" Martin sank into the nearest chair, his old coolness and courage swept from him.

"Oof!" added Tommy, mouthing his beloved plaything. Martin jumped up and dashed from the room, to the elevator, was shot below and began frantic inquiries of the night clerk.

"Nobody's passed through here in the last half-hour," he was informed.

"But Mrs. Leroy, my sister—is gone—gone in her night clothes. Some one has kidnapped her."

"It's pretty hot," the night clerk replied soothingly. "We're all feeling it."

"See here," Martin snapped back, "there's nothing the matter with me. Get the house detective, quick. Mrs. Leroy has been taken from her room after being chloroformed. Is there any passenger elevator in any other part of this building?"

"Yes—the one down the corridor close to the private entrance." The clerk picked up a desk phone. "Get Reilley, quick," he ordered. "Reilley is the night detective," he explained to Martin, who turned and hurried down the dark corridor to the door through which Silent Forrester had carried Margie. The doorman was shaken from his doze. "Yes sir," he stammered, "the gentleman just left in his limousine with his sick daughter." Martin rushed to the side street. It was entirely deserted.

"Lookit! Whatsamatter?" Reilley had arrived. He laid a comforting hand on Martin's shoulder, believing him another victim of too much prohibition.

"Come, and I'll show you." He led the detective back into the hotel and to Margie's room. The pretty folded clothes, the shoes, the stockings, the tousled pillow beside the one on which Tommy once more slept, and the faint odor of chloroform told Reilley the story.

"Was there any guest in the house to-night with an ill daughter?"

"There's a rich gentleman from Montreal in the room opposite this, who said he'd come with his car to take a sick daughter to the country."

"Have you a pass-key?"

"Sure."

"Quick. Open his door. He stole Mrs. Leroy."



REILLEY took a chance. There was no one in the room. Several travel-beaten bags had not been opened. On the bed lay a sheet of paper. Martin picked it up and read:

Captain Sutherland

To

Lieut. Martin.

Advice of a companion in arms: Lay off.

"You know who done it?" asked Reilley.

"Yes."

"Then it's up to you."

"It is."

"How about the kid?"

"I'll have to mind the baby, I guess."

"Then it's a private affair?"

"Yes. Tell them it was the heat or a press-agent job."

"All right, son." Reilley went his way, and Martin returned to Margie's room, to find Tommy once again awake. He spread his little arms toward Martin in invitation to be taken up, displaying the note pinned to his undershirt.

When Martin had finished reading Margie's inspired instructions, a ray of hope came to Martin. If she could possibly do so, she would get in touch with Annie Phelan. Annie was the one to watch, and St. Brigid's Orphan Asylum the place to cover carefully inside and out. He could do nothing until morning. He switched on a tiny, deeply shaded night-light, cut off the chandelier's brilliant glow and did his best to woo Tommy back to slumber. Fatigue overcame him, and his head fell on Margie's pillow, still warm and fragrant, before the gray came stealing into the skies above Manhattan's countless roofs and towers.

#### CHAPTER XIV

WHEN Margie came back to the land of the living, she found herself in a room flooded with sunlight, a portly woman sitting at a window sewing, her needle flashing like a little silver rapier in and out of a snowy garment. Margie felt light-headed and lay watching the play of the needle darting in and out of the linen.

It was a square-faced woman with iron-gray hair on which lay a tiny lace dab of servitude. Her dress was black and severely cut.

"Everything's all right, lovie," she said as Margie gradually pulled herself to an elbow. "You're in good hands. If you'd stayed where you were another day, you'd have wound up in jail. That fellow with you was a detective."

Margie gasped.

"You've got Mr. Forrester to thank," the woman went on. "He never deserts any of his people, not him. He's off now getting bail for the two others, and he's got one of the dandiest little lawyers that ever shouted in the face of a magistrate. When they're out, we'll all do the nicky for London or Paris or Buenos Ayres, where"—she sighed happily—"we can get a Bronx cocktail once in a while without having to degrade the Constitution of the United States."

"Mr. Forrester!" cried Margie, sitting bolt upright, her face gray with fright. "Mr. Forrester! Oh, please, ma'am, let me go away from here. I'm scared of him. Please, ma'am, let me go away from here." She began to cry, and the woman in black fidgeted uneasily.

"What you afraid of him for?" she demanded. "He's kind to all of us as long as we don't rock the boat. You shut up that crying." She frowned so prodigiously that Margie dried her tears on a corner of the coverlid. "Now, that's a good girl," said the woman. "I'm here to take care of you. I'm the housekeeper, Mary McGonigle; but if you're good, I'll let you call me Aunt Mary. He calls me that, and I've been with him off and on, and in and out, for fifteen years."

"How do you mean in and out?" asked Margie.

"While he was off to the war, a pest in the person of a detective, the same sort as the young man who had you in the hotel, got me in jail," replied Aunt Mary. "But as soon as Mr. Forrester got back, he spent money until he got a new trial and the right kind of a jury for me, and I was acquitted. That's the kind of a man he is. All you've got to do is behave yourself, and you'll be all right. He's going to send you to school and everything, and I'm going to be right here all the time so there won't be any scandal. He aint the kind to take advantage of a young orphan. Not him. He's a regular, he is."

"How did I get here?" Margie demanded.

"In an automobile. He just picked you up and removed you from the hotel."

"But the baby? The baby?"

"The baby's in good hands too. Don't worry about him."

MRS. McGONIGLE put down her sewing and went to a massive wardrobe, which she threw open with some of the exaggeration of gesture a stage magician might use in displaying the accomplishment of his best trick. It was filled with apparel of gorgeous hues.

"I'm mistress of the wardrobe of Your Majesty," laughed Mrs. McGonigle. "Here's a morning gown of cream and peaches, if you would like to have that color. Here's another of café-au-lait and one of silver with violets woven into the silk." Margie gazed at the display with eyes like blue saucers.

"And over here," said the mistress of the wardrobe, going to a low dressing-table and tilting a mirror so that Margie could get the reflection of its litter, "are rings and things enough to ransom a king." The display could be comparable only to a Fifth Avenue jeweler's window. Rings, bracelets, necklaces, brooches, chains, hairpins and hat-pins of silver, gold and platinum, studded with diamonds, sapphires, topazes, beryls, rubies, chalcedony, opals, emeralds, turquoise—these made a pool of prismatic fire.

"And just look around on the walls," suggested the mistress of the wardrobe. "There aint many pictures, but that little one there by the window is worth one hundred and fifty thousand iron men. The chief wanted it a long time, he told me, and it took him nearly ten years to acquire it. I helped him get it when I was housekeeper for the rich Stocker family in their humble little marble cottage at Newport."

So casually did the woman take the fact of her being in this room that Margie was soon over her first fright. At that, it was hardly more astounding than the events of the day before. Forrester had kidnaped her, but from whom? From no one who had a claim upon her. Mr. Martin or the kind old lawyer who had given her the ten-thousand-dollar bill and the baby the silver toy had no authority over her. The only person to whom she owed a sense of duty, as far as she could tell, was Mrs. Townsend, and as the man had told her over the telephone, the lady was "in the coop." She thanked her stars for writing that little note and pinning it

to Tommy's nightshirt. The baby would land in good hands, Annie Phelan's.

"Better let me dress you," suggested the woman in black. "It's late, and the chief will be coming in for lunch, if he isn't downstairs now."

"Say, what's he want to steal me for?" asked Margie as she kicked off the bed-clothes.

"Better try this peaches and cream one," suggested the woman. "Why, you see his sister is responsible to the orphan asylum for you, and the chief wishes to make a grand lady of you. When he wants anything, he just takes it. It's a way with him. Don't be afraid, lovie. He looks on you the same way as he looked on that expensive little picture on the wall or the diamonds and fine silks. You're just added to the collection, and this nice little house is filled from the cellar to the roof with the things he likes and just went and took."

The call of a telephone-bell brought an end to her disquisition.

"Get in your clothes, honey," advised the housekeeper. "It's him calling, and nobody can answer but me, because the phone is locked up in his room. Don't try to run away—please don't." She left the room, locking the door. Margie hopped to the keyhole. If she could only get to the tinkling instrument! John Martin might be a detective as the woman declared him to be, but her good common sense told her that she would be far better off in his care than in Forrester's. Besides, she wanted news of the baby and would know no rest until she was assured that he was safe in the care of her one sure friend, Annie. Listening at the keyhole, she heard the woman unlocking a door and then locking it again behind her. She turned to a window, drawing aside the long white curtains filled with sunlight. What she had thought was a faint design in their weave proved to be the shadows of a light but strong grillwork beyond the glass panes. She tried to raise the sashes but found them held by a secret catch. Her hope of sticking out her head and crying for help disappeared.

"I've got to get out of here!" she sobbed as she stared down into a quiet side-street of New York. "I just got to get out of here. I don't want all his pretty things. I want to get out of this place."

"Now, you quit that crying!" commanded Aunt Mary, reëntering the room.



"Mr. Forrester will be home in ten minutes, and he'll explain it all to you. There aint no use you trying to yell out the window. The glass is thick, and if you try to break it, you'll set off the burglar alarm, and I'll come up here and whale the stuffs out of you."

"I want to go away from here," moaned Margie.

"Which one of them confections you going to wear?" demanded Mrs. McGonigle. "Pick it out quick, and then I'll load you down with diamonds so you'll have to walk on your hands and knees. The idea of a girl from an orphan asylum refusing to be a society bud! Hurry up now, or I'll lay you across my knees and fan you."

"I'll scratch and bite you."

"You will, like fun. Get in them pretties, now."

## CHAPTER XV

MARGIE, the "cream-and-peaches" morning gown floating about her like pale clouds at sunrise, descended two flights of richly carpeted stairs, Aunt Mary at her heels. No sound of the outside world entered the house to hurt its deep calm; nor did the slightest noise arise from within. She thought of the warning of Mrs. Townsend that her brother wanted quiet, a warning given, it seemed, ages ago. The beauty of the appointments was beyond her realization. On the ground floor she stopped and looked up and stared at a magnificent chancel-light of silver, a thing wrought by the ancients, the very souls of its creators seeming to shine in it.

Aunt Mary led her to the morning-room in the rear of the first floor. Its deep windows overlooked from iron balconies a tiny garden in the center of which was a marble-rimmed pool. Two large and shapely trees cast grateful shadows amid fragrant shrubbery and beds of bright flowers.

"Sit down, will you?" Mrs. McGonigle drew a reclining chair to one of the windows and touched a button set in the casing. From somewhere came soft strains of music, and then the voice of a woman singing an air of such poignancy that Margie's eyes became misty.

"It's his favorite," Mrs. McGonigle informed her. "He's sentimental."

The music of the violins died down, and an organ played the accompaniment for the refrain of the song.

"He thinks the organ's grand," sighed Margie's guardian. "But it gives me the creeps. I think I hear him at the door."

Margie instinctively got to her feet. She felt, along with her fear of the silent, soft-spoken man, that she shouldn't be caught sitting down amid such splendor.

"Oh!" The ejaculation came from a tall, rather heavily built man standing on the threshold of the door leading to the hall. His hair was scant and gray, and he wore side whiskers. His nose was very common and pudgy, his cheeks rather lumpy; and under a white vest worn with a neutral-colored walking-suit protruded a round and small but distinctly marked stomach. He was very unpleasant to look at, and Margie was glad when he suddenly withdrew without a word to either of them.

"What a knob!" she whispered to Mrs. McGonigle, referring to the roundness at the gentleman's waistband. "He's horrible."

"Sit down," said Aunt Mary with a smile. "It's Mr. Forrester. It's a false stomach, and he wears little quills in his nose and uses chewing-gum stuck to his upper teeth to change the shape of his cheeks. They'd never pick him up in that rig."

"Was that Mr. Forrester?"

"Yep." The sound of the organ trailed to nothingness. "As soon as he changes, I'll go look out for the lunch. Now you take my advice and just listen to what he says. You're just a poor little dub and don't know nothing yet. Just listen and don't go to splashing all the bric-a-brac and other rococo stuff with hot tears. He hates boat-rockers, and if you try him too much, he'll turn you out, and you can go get a job slinging dishes in some cheap restaurant."

MR. FORRESTER, minus his disguise, entered with a smile, his eagle beak once more restored to its normal shape, his lean cheeks minus the padding, his bourgeois midriff protuberance laid aside.

"I'll go attend to the lunch, sir," said Aunt Mary, leaving hastily and gladly.

"How do you feel, Margie?" he asked.

"Sit down, please. Did you like the music?" She sank limply to the reclining chair. "There is nothing for you to worry about—not a thing. It was necessary to take you away from the handsome young gentleman who had you in charge,

necessary for my own safety and the safety of my friends. I'm sorry I could not do it any other way." He waited for her to say something but no word came. Her tongue seemed paralyzed.

"Aunt Mary will give you the best of care," he continued, his voice as gentle as an indulgent father's. "We are going to try to make something worth while out of you. I shall only stay for lunch, and then I must leave town for a week. In that time you will get used to the house, and you will have everything that a girl's heart might desire." He paused, but Margie couldn't think of a word to say. "Come, now," he urged, "give me your hand and tell me that you will trust me." He held a hand to her, and then the tears and the protests came.

"Please, Mr. Forrester, let me go away from here," she begged. "I'm scared, I am. If I could only get my old clothes and go back to the Asylum! I don't want all these pretty things. They're too much for an orphan. I want to go back and get me a job, sir. And the baby, Mr. Forrester; I'll die if I don't see the baby soon."

"The baby!" He laughed, and then into the cold eyes came little clouds. "What a child you are, Margie! If you went out into the world to try to make a living saddled with that brat that we bought as we would a pet bird or animal, you would find it mighty hard."

"No sir. He's an orphan too, and we'd get along. Then Annie Phelan gets out soon, and we could all share together."

"Annie Phelan?"

"Yes sir. She's another one."

"Another what?"

"Orphan, sir."

"A friend of yours?"

"Yes sir—the only one I got."

FORRESTER paced the floor, twisting his long, lean, powerful fingers together behind his back as he pondered the helplessness of the girl and her simple, honest desire in life.

"Margie," he said finally as he stood at the window near her, gazing down into the pool where sunlight and shadow played under the gently stirring canopy of leaves, "I find that I won't be able to stay to lunch with you. Aunt Mary will take good care of you, my dear. When I first saw you in the moonlight, something seemed to blaze within my veins for a moment, but

that something, that fire, seems to have been extinguished. You probably don't understand a word I'm saying, but that doesn't matter." He turned to her and looked down on her slight figure in its cloudy gown. "I suppose," he said solemnly, "you fell in love with Johnny Martin the moment you laid eyes on him." Her cheeks became crimson roses, and she did not answer. "And, I suppose," he said with a little sigh, "the handsome Johnny Martin was smitten dead the moment he picked you up."

"No sir—I mean yes sir—no sir," stammered Margie.

"The lunch is ready, Mr. Forrester." Mrs. McGonigle filled the doorway, a little white apron breaking the broad expanse of her black dress.

"I sha'n't be able to stay for lunch, Aunt Mary," he informed her. "I must hurry away. Take good care of her. If all goes well, I'll be back a week from today."

"Yes sir."

He leaned over and lifted one of Margie's little hands from which the scars of orphanage drudgery were already gone. "Good-by, my dear," he said, kissing it lingeringly, his eyes closed.

"Good-by, sir," she replied, for fear of him had left her.

## CHAPTER XVI

SIX days of luxurious captivity, sunshine, music, flowers, silks and satins, drifted by for Margie, and then from over the distant Jersey hills came a black cloud and a summer storm. For several hours Manhattan lay hot and breathless under a black pall; then huge raindrops began to slap against the Island's roofs and pinnacles, turrets and towers.

It poured all day and all night and started all over again the following morning, as if Jupiter Pluvius was determined to prove to the weather man, who had predicted "probably showers," what nonsense it was to put science or pseudo-science against nature.

Margie began to fret about the baby. Mrs. McGonigle found her by the garden window doing her bit in adding to the downpour. It was the kind of morning for the attic and old love-letters, for reading melancholy poems or playing Chopin on the pianola.

"Now, you quit that crying," ordered



the large woman in black. "I'm feeling that bad myself that one more squeak from you will set me off like a Johnstown flood."

"I c-c-an't h-h-help it." Margie's face was like a rain-beaten pansy.

"You're thinking about that young man," Aunt Mary said accusingly. "You needn't deny it. Mr. Forrester told me everything he knew about you—everything, from your being a poor miserable little orphan to trying to elope with Jimmy, the chauffeur, and then going off with that John Martin."

"I didn't try to elope with nobody," protested Margie. "I'm crying because I'm worried about the baby, and I want to get away from here."

"Don't lie to me." Mrs. McGonigle pulled a chair to the window and stared sadly out into the pool upon the marble-ringed circle of which the rain was doing a wild and fantastic dance. "I'm sad enough as it is, with Mr. Forrester going away looking like a broken-hearted man. If you were grown up in your mind, he'd have given you the cave-man stuff; that's what he'd have done. But all this kid business upset him."

SHE was silent for several moments. Then, "He had a little girl of his own once," she added solemnly. "He's got a picture of her in his locket, and one in his room. She must have been about your age when he lost her. It nearly killed him. Her mother died when she was a baby." Aunt Mary, who was ready for a good cry, shook herself free of the black thrall, bounced to her feet and with a wave of her right arm opened up fresh propaganda in her master's behalf.

"Look at all these treasures what are yours for the asking," she cried. "The house is filled with gold and silver and precious gems. Some of the finest furs ever worn by a woman are in a big icebox in the basement, and there's pearl necklaces the like of which a queen would give her good name for and throw in her empire for good will. And it's all yours if you'll just—"

"I'd give ten thousand dollars to get away from here," moaned Margie.

"You'd what?"

"I'd give ten thousand dollars to get away from here."

"Why not make it a hundred thousand?" asked Aunt Mary sarcastically.

"I haven't got that much."

"Why, that's strange. I thought you were rich as Creesis—most orphan-asylum girls are, you know."

"I've got the ten thousand dollars just the same."

"If you'll show it to me, I'll take this lace dab off my head and eat it before your eyes." Mrs. McGonigle stared at Margie with bitter earnestness. "Honest, I mean it," she added.

"I haven't got it with me, but my friend Annie Phelan in St. Brigid's has it and is keeping it for me."

"In her sock, I suppose."

"Yes ma'am."

"Look here." Mrs. McGonigle plumped herself in the chair opposite Margie again and slapped a hand against a fat knee. "Don't be kidding a woman of my age."

"I'll make Annie give it to you if you'll let me out," replied Margie.

"What kind of a little trick is this you're trying to play me?"

"It aint a trick, ma'am. She has my money, and if you don't believe it, you can call up the asylum and ask her."

"Of all the lies and fairy tales!"

"It's true, ma'am."

Aunt Mary's heavy neck was spotted with red as her anger rose. "I think I'll just make you take that lie back," she snapped. "Come along with me."

They went to Forrester's room, where the telephone instrument was safely kept. "My instructions are not to use it except when there's his call," Aunt Mary said as she picked up a telephone-book and began to search for the number of the asylum. "But it can't do any harm to ask for Annie Phelan."

## CHAPTER XVII

WHEN the call came into St. Brigid's Orphan Asylum for Annie Phelan, that young person was engaged in the beatific task of holding Margie's baby. Except for the sacklike uniform she wore, all the drabness seemed to have gone out of her life. Color had come to her thin cheeks, and her little upturned nose, in consequence, seemed not so red as it used to be when the savage woman in the kitchen kept her sniffing over the never dwindling mountains of greasy dishes.

The handsome young man down in the hall, patiently waiting developments at a

tiny switchboard, a fast machine with its engine ever purring at the curb outside, had carefully rehearsed her for this critical moment. If some one other than Margie was on the wire, she was to plead to speak with her, to stammer, cry and ask questions. He would coach her as he listened-in beside her, and as another gentleman talked over a newly installed instrument with a telephone official, who would give the address of the person calling.

"Quick, Annie. Put down that baby!"

The matron, in great excitement, stood in the door of the dormitory. Annie deposited Tommy on the floor and followed her.

Downstairs, John Martin, his lips set in a straight line, his heart beating at a rapid clip, sat with his ear to the receiver, his assistant already tracing the call. A third man, a detective from police headquarters, a wiry, nervous chap with quick-shifting eyes and a long, lean, fighting jaw, had signaled the chauffeur to be ready.

Aunt Mary McGonigle had not long to wait.

"Yes ma'am. This is Annie Phelan," announced Margie's orphan friend.

"Do you know a girl named Margie?"

"Oh, yes ma'am. Is she there, ma'am? Could I talk with her? Please, ma'am! She and I are friends."

"Well, this girl has been telling me some lies. She works for me. She says you've got some money belonging to her." Martin prompted her for her reply.

"Yes'm. I'm keeping her money for her. How's that? Oh." She was again prompted. "It's a lot of money. A leg'cy or something." The man with the lean jaw signed to Martin that the number had been traced, scribbling the address in a little notebook.

"Just begin to cry and beg for a chance to talk with Margie," whispered Annie's prompter as he darted for the door, the detective with him. Annie burst into the most dismal series of yowls, as with a thunder of the exhaust, the machine darted through the rain away from St. Brigid's and in the direction of Silent Forrester's city refuge.

IT was dangerous going over the slithery asphalt, but the man at the wheel knew his business, and the headquarters detective, his coat thrown back, cleared the way by standing on the running-board and showing his badge of authority to every

traffic-cop. They were soon through the cross-street and on the Speedway, where the car went ahead under every ounce of power its great engine could give, its siren shrieking a warning. Riverside Drive, with its abundant curb-to-curb space, slowed them down but little, and Annie Phelan was still weeping and wailing to Mary McGonigle when the car stopped in front of one of a row of well-kept three-story residences between Broadway and the green terraces that descend to the Hudson just south of Grant's Tomb.

The man at the wheel darted to the basement door. Martin and the wiry individual, who seemed anxious to get in action, ascended the steps. In answer to their ring Mrs. McGonigle stuck a cautious nose around the edge of the door. Both men pushed forward with their shoulders, to find that six inches of chain held the door fast. They drew back and bucked it together with a mighty crash. Mrs. McGonigle knew what that meant, and she fought to prevent their entrance, but they came again and again with savage persistence.

"Margie!" cried Martin. "Margie! It's John Martin." Another crash, and the fastenings of the chain gave. They tumbled into the hall, scrambled to their feet and with guns in hand awaited the fight they expected from Forrester.

Margie was halfway down the stairs, clad like an houri, her eyes glistening, her cheeks flaming. Her fairy prince had come to take her from captivity! As he stood, half crouched, his pistol held at his right hip, expecting any moment a clip from the deadliest marksman that ever swung an automatic, his soulful eyes spitting fire from under the rim of a dark felt hat, he appeared to her the incarnation of the spirit of romance and adventure.

"Where's Forrester?" he demanded.

"He's not here," she replied. Her heart was too full to say anything more, and so she sat down on the stairs and began to cry.

"What's this?" suddenly laughed the headquarters man as he stared at the trembling Aunt Mary. "It's Mary Sidepockets, as I live!"

"You know her?" asked Martin.

"Do I? I sent her up once, caught her red-handed with her famous skirt pockets stuffed with half the jewelry of a department store. Then Forrester's lawyer got her out on the old plea of temporary in-



sanity." He slipped a pair of handcuffs on Aunt Mary, who promptly dropped into a tall-backed hall chair with a volley of expletives.

"Where's the telephone, Margie?" asked Martin. "Don't cry any more just now. We're busy."

"It's upstairs," she sobbed.

"Show me the way. Finnegan, you hold this woman and watch the door for Forrester. I'll get Mr. Wilkins on the wire. I think this is the place where Forrester keeps most of the rings and things our clients have been robbed of. If he comes in suddenly be quick, for he is a dead shot and fears no man."

## CHAPTER XVIII

**M**R. WILKINS came to the Forrester house without loss of time, his office manager telephoning for a detail of men to be sent ahead of him from the nearest police station.

The place was covered front and rear, roof and cellar, when he joined the investigator about whose neck clung Margie's arms.

"Break away!" the lawyer ordered with a laugh. "Good Lord, look at that!" He pointed to the little painting in Margie's room, the masterpiece which Mr. Forrester had wanted for so long and had finally secured with the assistance of Mary McGonigle, alias Aunt Mary, alias Mary Sidepockets. "And that!" His eyes opened wide as he stared at the display of jewels on her dressing-table. "There's the famous Baker black pearl ring. The house must be filled with our stuff. What luck! What a splendid summer's job." He clapped Martin on the shoulder. "Johnny, my boy, the rewards offered for all my clients' rings and things will mount up to sixty thousand dollars."

"Here's my reward!" Johnny Martin replied, catching Margie in his arms. "She has just told me that she would have died if I hadn't come in another day. It was love at first sight with both of us."

"All that we need now for a clean-up of the case is that excellent gentleman Silent Forrester. How about him?" asked Mr. Wilkins.

"We're waiting for him."

"He was to come back today," said Margie, "but—"

"But what?" asked Martin.

"I hope he don't. He was kind to me."

"Who is the woman downstairs?" asked Mr. Wilkins.

"His housekeeper, an old thief," replied Martin.

"We'd better have a talk with her. He will probably telephone here to see whether the way is clear. Where is the phone?"

"In the next room. Margie says no one could answer it except Mrs. McGonigle. She kept the instrument locked in Forrester's bedchamber."

They went to Forrester's room, whither Mrs. McGonigle was brought.

**H**ER eyes red from weeping, despair having followed her first outburst of hate for the sleuth who had for the second time made her feel the weight of the law's hard hand, Mary Sidepockets sat handcuffed before the astute old gentleman from downtown.

"Mary," he began, "we expect Mr. Forrester to call you on this telephone."

"He will call," she replied simply.

"If you will assist us, I can guarantee that you will not be prosecuted."

"I'm no rat."

"If you do not assist us, you will go to jail along with him."

"Phut!" Mary glowered at Mr. Wilkins.

"And then," he added coaxingly, "there are many rewards out for this thief who employed you and probably took advantage of your ignorance. You may share in them and retire to a life of comfort, an honest life."

"I'll die and rot in jail first." Her broad face was black with anger, and she seemed about to spring at the lawyer, when three sharp rings came from the telephone.

Mary, faithful to the last, jumped for the instrument with her manacled hands extended, but the nemesis of her career was too quick for her, and she was hurried back and held fast.

"Suppose," suggested Mr. Wilkins in his most fatherly and alluring tones, "that you answer for us, Margie."

"Me?" she gasped. Martin turned pale. It was a Judas-like business. He would not have minded meeting on a fair fighting level the man who had been his captain and who had saved his life for him, but to have a hand in his betrayal, to have the girl he loved used as the instrument of his downfall, luring him to the trap, was far from his liking.

"Just a moment, Johnny." Mr. Wilkins saw his perturbation and guessed what was passing through his mind. "I understand your feelings, but I am employed to direct this business." He paused to frame his suggestion to Margie, and in silence, save for the slapping of sheets of rain against the panes of the windows, the others waited.

"Margie," he began at last, "pick up the telephone and say that this woman is downstairs ill and sent you to tell Mr. Forrester that the way is clear." She did not obey him. "It is this way, my child," he went on. "Forrester is not the kind of man to be allowed at large. He is an enemy of society."

"Except when society needed his services in No Man's Land, Mr. Wilkins," interrupted Martin calmly.

"Ahem, if you please." Mr. Wilkins chided his investigator. "Margie, it is your duty to do as I ask. It is the duty of every law-abiding person to help the law in its course. Tell him—"

THE instrument again sounded. Margie picked up the receiver gingerly, and as Mary Sidepockets opened her wide mouth to yell a warning to her master, her ancient enemy behind her stuffed a handkerchief into it and held it within the depths with a strong hand.

"That's a sensible, dear girl," whispered Mr. Wilkins. "If you land him, all the money reward will be yours." Martin covered his face with his hands.

"This is Margie." It seemed hours before Forrester at the other end of the wire stopped talking to the girl.

"All right, sir. Thank you, sir. Wait a minute, sir." She turned to those waiting so eagerly about her. "He says he's going to stop taking other people's things," she said. "He's going away and just called me up to tell me to be a good girl and marry his old sergeant, Johnny Martin." Her eyes filled with tears as she turned back to the instrument.

"Yes. Oh, yes sir. There's a lot of people here waiting for you. And Johnny, he's here too, and the lawyer and lots of detectives." They heard his great burst of laughter.

"Good Lord, you've spoiled everything!" gasped Mr. Wilkins.

Johnny took the receiver from his sweetheart's hands.

"Hello, Captain. This is Johnny Martin. I never got a fair chance to thank you for... How's that? Yes, I'll tell them." He turned to Mr. Wilkins. "Captain Sutherland says that he has spent all week trying to get that Westchester woman and his chauffeur out on bail and has just managed to swing it."

"Then they're gone!" gasped Mr. Wilkins. "They'll surely forfeit the bail."

"And he says that the woman Mary there is a good faithful creature, and as honest as the day is long," added Martin. "She has been straight ever since he got her out of prison, he says, and gives as proof the fact that at any time she could have robbed him of everything in the place."

"I suppose so," mused the lawyer. "Will you kindly ask your captain, Johnny, if he'll strike a bargain with me?"

"He asks what is the bargain?"

"Tell him if he'll just give his word not to bother us again, we'll be content to get back what we have here and let Mary go."

"He says he gives his word."

The storm outside had expended itself, and through a suddenly torn gap in the clouds the noonday sun flooded the wet city, making it a glistening silver-towered bauble not unlike the carillon toy with which Tommy was then banging the floor of St. Brigid's Orphan Asylum.

Mr. Forrester was on his way to try the narrow path, an ache in his heart, perhaps, for he had suffered the great vanquishment that comes to men when the wisdom of age tries to meet the fire of youth in a contest for love and beauty.

"Well, I shall remain here and get an inventory of my rings and things made," sighed Mr. Wilkins. "I suppose you'll want your vacation now, Johnny."

"Yes sir, as soon as Margie gets into her street-clothes."

"And then where?"

"I thought we'd go and get the other two orphans, Annie and Tommy."

Margie's arms swept to his neck. "Oh, Johnny," she cried, "I'm so happy."

"But will you talk to your people before you are married?" asked Mr. Wilkins.

"Gee!" laughed Martin. "I haven't got any. I'm an orphan too."





## "You've Gone Way Past Me, Jim"

"Today good old Wright came to my office. All day the boys had been dropping in to congratulate me on my promotion. But with Wright it was different.

"When I had to give up school to go to work I came to the plant seeking any kind of a job—I was just a young fellow without much thought about responsibilities. They put me on the payroll and turned me over to Wright, an assistant foreman then as now. He took a kindly interest in me from the first. 'Do well the job that's given you, lad,' he said, 'and in time you'll win out.'

"Well, I did my best at my routine work, but I soon realized that if ever I was going to get ahead I must not only do my work well, but prepare for something better. So I wrote to Scranton and found I could get exactly the course I needed to learn our business. I took it up and began studying an hour or two each evening.

"Why, in just a little while my work took on a whole new meaning. Wright began giving me the most particular jobs—and asking my advice. And there came, also, an increase in pay. Next thing I knew I was made assistant foreman of a new department. I kept right on studying because I could see results and each day I was applying what I learned. Then there was a change and I was promoted to foreman—at good money, too.

"And now the first big goal is reached—I am superintendent, with an income that means independence, comforts and enjoyments at home—all those things that make life worth living.

"Wright is still at the same job, an example of the tragedy of lack of training. What a truth he spoke when he said today, 'You've gone way past me, Jim—and you deserve to.' Heads win—every time!"

Yes, it's simply a question of training. Your hands can't earn the money you need, but your head can if you'll give it a chance.

The International Correspondence Schools have helped more than two million men and women to win promotion, to earn more money, to know the joy of getting ahead in business and in life.

Isn't it about time to find out what they can do for you?

You, too, can have the position you want in the work of your choice, with an income that will make possible money in the bank, a home of your own, the comforts and luxuries you would like to provide your family. No matter what your age, your occupation, your education, or your means—you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it—without obligation on your part or a penny of cost. That's fair, isn't it? Then mark and mail this coupon.

### INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2470, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

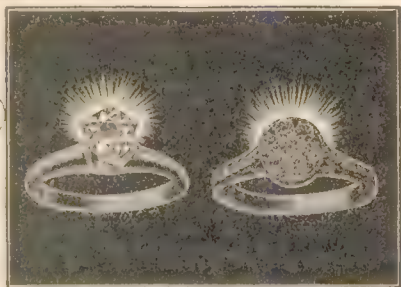
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring                | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer             | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Painter            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman           | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice          | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker                      | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSINESS MANAGEMENT     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating           | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER                 | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping          | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer                | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT                      | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder         | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman        | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder               | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer            | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING           | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE OPERATING    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker             | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt.      | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMIST                        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising         |

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Present \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 and No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Canadians may send this coupon to  
 International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada

7-26-18



## DIAMONDS for a Few Cents a Day

SEND your name and address and we will send you our 128-page book of diamond bargains. It is the result of nearly 100 years' experience and shows you millions of dollars' worth of jewelry to choose from—and they may be paid for at the rate of only a few cents a day.

### No Money Down

The diamond you select will be sent upon your simple request—without a penny down. Then if you do not think it the greatest bargain you have ever seen, send it back at our expense. If you decide to keep it, your credit is good.

### 8% Yearly Dividends

You are guaranteed an 8 per cent yearly increase in value on all exchanges. You can also earn a 5 per cent bonus. The book tells how.

### Write Today

Send your name and address today—NOW. You will be under no obligation. You will receive our 128-page diamond book by the next mail. Send your name and address NOW to Dept. 81.

**J-M-LYON & CO.**

1 Maiden Lane, New York, N. Y.

## Scientific Device That Does Away With TRUSS-FREE TRIAL



Inner surface is made adhesive to secure the PLAPAO-PAD firmly to the body, keeping the PLAPAO continually applied and the pad from slipping. Nostraps, buckles or springs attached. Soft as velvet—easy to apply.

### Over 250,000 Now In Use

We have proved to hundreds of thousands of sufferers from hernia (rupture) that to obtain lasting relief and develop a natural process for betterment comes by wearing a Plapao-Pad. This patented mechanico-chemico device can do the same for you. The wearing of an improper support aggravates rather than improves the condition. The Plapao-Pad can and does aid the muscles in giving proper support, thereby rendering efficient aid to Nature in restoring strength to the weakened muscles. Being self-adhesive there is no slipping and shifting of pad with resultant irritation and chafing. Most comfortable to wear—no delay from work. Awarded Gold Medal at Rome and Grand Prix at Paris.

Send No Money. We will send you a trial of Plapao absolutely FREE, you pay nothing for this trial now or later. Write for it today, also full information.

**PLAPAO LABORATORIES, Block 88 St. Louis, Mo.**

### Free Book

Containing complete story of the origin and history of that wonderful instrument—the

### Easy to Play Easy to Pay

## SAXOPHONE

This book tells you when to use Saxophone—singly, in quartettes, in sextettes, or in regular band; how to transpose cello parts in orchestra and many other things you would like to know.

You can learn to play the scale in one hour's practice, and soon be playing popular airs. You can double your income, your pleasure, and your popularity. Easy to pay by our easy payment plan.

### MAKES AN IDEAL PRESENT

Send for free Saxophone book and catalog of everything in True-Tone band and orchestra instruments.

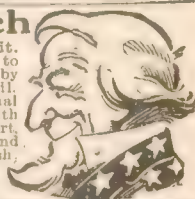
**BUESCHER BAND INSTRUMENT CO.**  
374 Buescher Block, Elkhart, Ind.

## Cuticura Talcum is Fragrant and Very Healthful

Sample free of Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden, Mass. 25c. everywhere.

## Copy this Sketch

and let me see what you can do with it. Many newspaper artists earning \$30.00 to \$200.00 or more per week were trained by my personal individual lessons by mail. Landon Picture Charts make original drawing easy to learn. Send sketch with 6c in stamps for sample Picture Chart, long list of successful students, and evidence of what YOU can accomplish. Please state your age.



The Landon School 310 Victor Bldg. Cleveland, Ohio

## Free Book on PATENTS



Contains valuable information and advice to inventors on securing Patents. Send model or sketch of your invention for Free Opinion of its patentable nature. Prompt service. 20 years' experience. Write today.

TALBERT & TALBERT, 4388 Talbert Bldg., WASHINGTON, D. C.

## HOW TO RAISE CASH

We pay exceptionally high prices for new or broken jewelry, diamonds (loose or mounted), watches, gold, silver or platinum in any amount or form, gold or silver ores and nuggets, mercury, magneto points, false teeth, war bonds, war stamps, unused postage of any denomination, and anything of value. Cash sent to you by return mail. Goods returned to you within 10 days if you're not satisfied with the amount we send you.

**THE OHIO SMELTING & REFINING CO., 250 Lennox Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.**

## Big Profits in Vulcanizing



Make \$10 to \$30 per day with Anderson Steam Vulcanizers. Better tire repairing at one-tenth the usual cost. Big profits.

We teach you the famous Anderson method of vulcanizing, also the operation of the Anderson Super-heated Vulcanizer and Anderson Retreader and how to build up a successful business in your town with little capital.

There are Anderson schools of vulcanizing in 34 states. It's the schooling plus equipment that makes Anderson tireologists distinctive.

The course requires 5 to 10 days and costs \$35.00. If you buy an Anderson Vulcanizer any time we refund your \$35 and pay you \$5 per day expense money for each day of the 10 days served because we sell the work you do.

**ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER CO.**  
106 Williams Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind., U. S. A.



## Classified Advertising Department

### FOR WRITERS

**FREE TO WRITERS**—Expert Criticism. Stories, etc., sold on commission. Also want Photoplays and Ideas for California Productions. Experience unnecessary—Plot Chart Free. Submit Miss. to Suite Harvard Co., Italian American Bldg., San Francisco, Cal.

### HELP WANTED

**SALESMEN:** Earn \$3,500 to \$10,000 a year. City or Traveling. Experience unnecessary. Quickly qualify through our amazing System. Free Employment Service to members. Send for Salesmanship book, list of lines and full particulars. Nat. Salesmen's Tr. Ass'n, Dept. 141 B. Chicago, Ill.

**WE PAY \$8 A DAY** taking orders for Insyde Tyres. Guaranteed to prevent punctures and blowouts. Double tire mileage. Any tire. Tremendous demand. Low price. Write quick for money. American Accessories Co., B212, Cincinnati, Ohio.

**AGENTS,** \$60 to \$200 a Week, Free Samples, Gold Sign Letters for Store and Office windows. Anyone can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 4313 N. Clark St., Chicago.

**RAILWAY MAIL CLERK EXAMINATIONS** coming everywhere. Hundreds men—women, over 17, wanted. \$1800-\$2300 year. Write immediately for list positions. Franklin Institute, Dept. F41, Rochester, N. Y.

### INSTRUCTION

**\$3,000 TO \$5,000 yearly.** Study Bacteriology, Public Health, Sanitation, Fascinating profession. Interesting Correspondence and Residential courses. Experience unnecessary. Degrees granted. We help secure positions. Prospectus free. American College of Bacteriology, Dept. E, 4457 W. Monroe St., Chicago.

### OLD COINS

**COLLECT OLD COINS** for pleasure and profit. Send only 10c. Get large old U. S. Copper cent, nearly size of half-dollar and illustrated coin catalogue. Send now. B. Max Mehl, Coin dealer, Dept. B, Mehl Building, Fort Worth, Texas.

### PATENTS, PATENT ATTORNEYS, ETC.

**PATENTS SECURED.** Prompt service. Avoid dangerous delays. Send for our "Record of Invention" form and Free Book telling How to Obtain a Patent. Send sketch or model of your invention for Preliminary Examination and Advice Free. Charges reasonable. Write Today. J. L. Jackson & Co., 100 Ouray Bldg., Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS—TRADEMARKS—COPYRIGHTS.** Write for free Illustrated Guide Books and Evidence of Conception Blank. Send model or sketch and description for our free opinion of its patentable nature. Highest References. Prompt Service. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 696 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

**INVENTORS** who desire to secure patent should write for our guide book "How to Get Your Patent." Send model or sketch and description and we will give our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 177, Washington, D. C.

### PHOTOPLAYS, STORIES, ETC.

**WANTED**—Men and Women ambitious to make money writing Stories and Photoplays. Send for wonderful Free Book that tells how. Authors' Press, Dept. 116, Auburn, N. Y.

Ambitious Writers of Photoplays, Short Stories, Poems, Songs, send today for Free valuable, instructive book, "KEY TO SUCCESSFUL WRITING" including 65 helpful suggestions on writing and selling. Atlas Publishing Co., 514 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

### SONGS

**THAT \$10,000 SONG "YOU TAUGHT ME TO LOVE YOU."** Ask dealer or send 35c to Burdick Pub. Co., Lockport, N. Y.

**A NEW DIAMOND**

**SEND NO MONEY**

**FREE**

**FOR 10 DAYS' WEAR**

Send for this brilliant sparkling **Rosebrite**, mounted in a solid gold ring. Has all the sparkle, all the fire, all the beauty of the finest genuine diamonds.

**Just send your name.** We will send you a Rosebrite, prepaid. When it comes merely deposit \$1.75 with postman. Wear the ring 10 days. IF YOU OR ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS CAN TELL IT FROM A DIAMOND SEND IT BACK, and we will refund deposit. If you decide to buy it, send the balance at \$3.00 a month. Payment made only \$10.75. Write today. You run no risk. Be sure to send correct name and address in plain, legible style.

**ROSEBRITE DIAMOND COMPANY** Dept. 122 30 N. Dearborn St., CHICAGO



## High School Course in Two Years!

### You Want to Earn Big Money!

**And you will not be satisfied unless you earn steady promotion.** But are you prepared for the job ahead of you? Do you measure up to the standard that insures success? For a more responsible position a fairly good education is necessary. To write a sensible business letter, to prepare estimates, to figure cost and to compute interest, you must have a certain amount of preparation. All this you must be able to do before you will earn promotion. Many business houses hire no men whose general knowledge is not equal to a high school course. Why? Because big business refuses to burden itself with men who are barred from promotion by the lack of elementary education.

### Can You Qualify for a Better Position

We have a plan whereby you can. We can give you a complete but simplified high school course in two years, giving you all the essentials that form the foundation of practical business. It will prepare you to hold your own where competition is keen and exacting. Do not doubt your ability, but make up your mind to it and you will soon have the requirements that will bring you success and big money. **YOU CAN DO IT.**

Let us show you how to get on the road to success. It will not cost you a single working hour. We are so sure of being able to help you that we will cheerfully return to you, at the end of ten lessons, every cent you sent us if you are not absolutely satisfied. What fairer offer can we make you? Write today. It costs you nothing but a stamp.

### American School of Correspondence

Dept. H-2110 Chicago, U. S. A.

### American School of Correspondence,

Dept. H-2110 Chicago, Ill.

Explain how I can qualify for positions checked.

.....Architect.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Lawyer.	\$5,000 to \$15,000
.....Building Contractor.	\$5,000 to \$10,000	.....Mechanical Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000
.....Automobile Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....Shop Superintendent.	\$3,000 to \$7,000
.....Automobile Repairman.	\$2,500 to \$4,000	.....Employment Manager.	\$4,000 to \$10,000
.....Civil Engineer.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Steam Engineer.	\$2,000 to \$4,000
.....Structural Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....Foreman's Course.	\$2,000 to \$4,000
.....Business Manager.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Photoplay Writer.	\$2,000 to \$10,000
.....Certified Public Accountant.	\$7,000 to \$15,000	.....Sanitary Engineer.	\$2,000 to \$5,000
.....Accountant and Auditor.	\$2,500 to \$7,000	.....Telephone Engineer.	\$2,500 to \$5,000
.....Draftsman and Designer.	\$2,500 to \$4,000	.....Telegraph Engineer.	\$2,500 to \$5,000
.....Electrical Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....High School Graduate.	In two years.
.....General Education.	In one year.	.....Fire Insurance Expert.	\$3,000 to \$10,000

Name..... Address.....



## DEEP WATER MEN

ANOTHER group of Culpeper Zandt's swift-paced and picturesque stories of intrigue and adventure in the Pacific will begin in the next, the March, issue of the **The Blue Book Magazine**

## SEXOLOGY

by William H. Walling, A. M., M. D.  
Imparts in one volume:

- Knowledge a Young Man Should Have.
- Knowledge a Young Husband Should Have.
- Knowledge a Father Should Have.
- Knowledge a Father Should Impart to His Son.
- Medical Knowledge a Husband Should Have.
- Knowledge a Young Woman Should Have.
- Knowledge a Young Wife Should Have.
- Knowledge a Mother Should Have.
- Knowledge a Mother Should Impart to Her Daughter.
- Medical Knowledge a Wife Should Have.

Illustrated.  
All in one volume, \$2.25 postpaid.  
Write for "Other People's Opinions" and Table of Contents  
Puritan Pub. Co., Dept. 780, Central, Phila., Pa.

## LABLACHE

FACE POWDER

When you ask your druggist for Lablache, why is it he seldom offers you a substitute? Because he knows there is no better face powder, and that the class of women who use it are satisfied — it's so natural.

**Refuse Substitutes**  
They may be dangerous.  
Flesh, White, Pink or Cream. 76c a box of druggist or by mail.  
Over two million boxes sold annually. Send 10c for a sample box.

**BEN LEVY CO.**  
French Perfumers, Dept. 83  
125 Kingston St., Boston, Mass.



## "DON'T SHOUT"



"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' With the MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right."

"The MORLEY PHONE for the

## DEAF

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless."

Anyone can adjust it.

Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 778, 26 S. 15th St., Philadelphia



## Your Face is Your Fortune

The world's greatest facial remedy will restore ruined complexions to the beauty and purity of youth.

IF YOUR blood is impure, if you have pimples, freckles, wrinkles, blackheads, redness of face or nose, a muddy, sallow skin, or any blemish on or under the skin, you need

**Dr. JAMES P. CAMPBELL'S**  
SAFE ARSENIC COMPLEXION WAFERS

These marvelous beautifiers of the complexion and the skin are wonderfully effective, and are absolutely safe and harmless. The prescription was first used 35 years ago by Dr. Campbell, and he has made countless thousands of women and men happy in the possession of a pure, spotless complexion.

Mailed in plain cover on receipt of 50c and \$1.00 from  
RICHARD FINK CO., Dept. 57, 396 Broadway, New York City  
Every Druggist can get this remedy for you from his wholesale dealer.

## MAKE MONEY AT HOME

You can make from \$1 to \$2 an hour writing show cards in your spare time, quickly and easily learned by our new simple method. No canvassing or soliciting. We sell your work and pay you cash each week.

Full particulars and booklet free. Write today.

**AMERICAN SHOW CARD SCHOOL**  
200 Ryrie Building  
Yonge & Shuter Streets, Toronto, Canada



## If You Can Tell it from a GENUINE DIAMOND send it back

To prove our blue-white MEXICAN DIAMOND closely resembles a genuine diamond with same DAZZLING RAINBOW FIRE, we will send a selected 1 carat gem in Ladies' Solitaire Ring (Cat. price \$4.98) for Half Price to introduce, \$2.63, or in Gent's Heavy Tooth Belcher Ring (Cat. price \$6.26) for \$3.25. Our finest 12k Gold Filled mountings. GUARANTEED 2 YEARS. SEND NO MONEY. Just mail postcard or this ad. State size. We will mail at once C. O. D. If not pleased return in 2 days for money back less handling charges. Write for Free Catalog. Agents Wanted. **MEXICAN DIAMOND IMPORTING CO.**, Dept. BB, LAS CRUCES, N. MEX. (Exclusive controllers Mexican Diamonds)



**BUY TODAY**

**10 MONTHS TO PAY**

**7½% Yearly Increase Guaranteed**

**SPECIAL TERMS**—Ten months credit on any article selected from the SWEET catalog. No money in advance. Shipment made for your examination. First payment to be made only after you have convinced yourself that SWEET values cannot be equalled. If not what you wish return at our expense. Any diamond bought of us may be returned for exchange at an increased value of 7½% more than you paid.

**SPECIAL VALUE**

**ONLY \$15.90**

**Sweet's Cluster**  
7 Fine Diamonds, set in Platinum. Looks like 1½ carat Solitaire. Price, \$62.50.

**NO RED TAPE—NO DELAY**

Every transaction CONFIDENTIAL. You don't do justice to yourself and your dollars unless you inspect our unusual values in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, Silverware, Leather goods, etc. Send TODAY for SWEET DeLuxe Catalog. Write NOW to Dept. 61-G.

**THE HOUSE OF QUALITY**  
**L. W. SWEET, INC.**  
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

**You can be quickly cured, if you**

**STAMMER**

Send 10 cents for 288-page book on Stammering and Stuttering, "Its Cause and Cure." It tells how I cured myself after stammering 20 yrs. B. N. Bogus, 3861 Bogus Bldg., 1147 N. 11th St., Indianapolis.

**ROUT THE ROOT WITH ZITZ**

and permanently destroy your superfluous hair. Simple to use, rapid and effective. Harmless and painless. No burning chemicals. No electricity. Used by Actresses and Beauty Specialists. Avoid imitations. For sale at better stores or direct by mail. Call to have Free Demonstration or write today for **FREE BOOK** Mme. Berthe, Specialist, 41D, 12 W. 40th St., New York

**I was BALD**

Picture (from photo) shows how bald I was when I came across a hair elixir that gave the long needed aid to Nature, and now I possess the prolific growth of healthy hair. This elixir is called **KOTAIKO**. Contains Women, men, children use Kotaiko for dandruff, falling hair, baldness. Most druggists sell it; or I will mail you a proof box of Kotaiko with brochure and guarantee for 10 cents, silver or stamps.

**J. H. Brittain, PA-413 Station X, New York**

**BE SLENDER**

**Want to become slender, agile, healthy? See the pictures; the shadows are to give you idea of size before reduction of weight. Eat all you need. Safe, reliable; no salts or calomel, no thyroid, no loss of time. Just use KOREIN** tabules and follow the simple, easy directions as aid to reduce 10 to 60 pounds (whatever you need to) under money-refund guarantee. Amaze all. Become lighter, younger, attractive, add years to your life! Ask for **KOREIN** tabules (pronounced koreen) at any drug store. Or write for **FREE BROCHURE** to **Korein Company, N B-413, Sta. X, New York**



Mae Murray and David Powell in George Fitzmaurice's Paramount Picture, "Idols of Clay"

# The most fascinating thing in the world!

—learning to write for the Movies! Millions are yearning to do it! Thousands are learning how! Movie lovers everywhere are taking it up! It's a wonderful new idea—exciting, magnetic, full of a thousand glowing new possibilities for everyone—**LEARNING HOW TO WRITE PHOTOPLAYS AND STORIES BY A SIMPLE NEW SYSTEM OF GOING TO THE MOVIES TO GET IDEAS!**

The wonder, the thrill, the joy, the deep personal gratification of seeing your own thoughts, your own ideas, your own dreams, the scenes you pictured in your fancy, the situations sketched in your imagination, the characters you whimsically portrayed—all gloriously come to life right there on the screen before your very eyes, while you sit in the audience with that flushed, proud smile of success! YOURS! Yours at last. And you never dreamed it could be! You doubted yourself,—thought you needed a fancy education or "gift of writing."

To think of thousands now writing plays and stories, who used to imagine they NEVER COULD! Not geniuses, but just average, everyday, plain, me-and-you kind of people. Men and women in many businesses and professions—the modest worker, the clerk, the stenographer, bookkeeper, salesman, motorman, truckman, barber, boiler-maker, doctor, lawyer, salesgirl, nurse, manicurist, model—people of all trades and temperaments deeply immersed in "manufacturing movie ideas," of planning scenarios, of adapting ideas from photoplays they see, of re-building plots, of transforming situations, or re-making characters seen on the films—all devoting every moment of their spare time to this absorbing, happy work! Turning leisure hours into golden possibilities!

And the big secret of their boundless enthusiasm, *now catching on like wild-fire among all classes of people*, is that many of them, by reading some article just as you are reading this, have discovered the wonders of a New System of Story and Play Writing, published at Auburn, New York, which enables them to make such rapid progress that they are soon transfixed with amazement at the simplicity and ease with which plays and stories are put together for the magazines and moving picture studios.

For the world's supply of photoplays is constantly absorbed in the huge, hungry maw of public demand. Nearly anybody may turn to playwrighting with profit. It is the most fascinating thing in the world! And also most lucrative. Skilled writers live in luxury and have princely incomes. They dictate their own terms and never are dictated to. They live and work and do as they please. They are free, independent, prosperous and popular!

You need not stay outside of this Paradise, unless you WANT to! You have as much right to success as they. They, too, had to begin—they, too, were once uncertain of themselves. But they made a start; they took a chance; they gave themselves the benefit of the doubt; they simply BELIEVED they COULD—AND THEY DID! Your experience may be the very same; so why not have a try at it? The way is wide open and the start easier than ever you dreamed. Listen! The Authors' Press, of Auburn, New York, today makes you this astonishing offer: Realizing that you, like many others, are uncertain of your ability and don't know whether you could learn to write or not, they agree to send you absolutely free, "The Wonder Book for Writers," which is a book of wonders for ambitious men and women, beautifully illustrated with handsome photographs—a gold mine of ideas that will gratify your expectations so fully that you will be on the tip-toe of eagerness to BEGIN WRITING AT ONCE!

So don't turn over this page without writing your name and address below and mailing at once. You're nothing to pay. You're not obligated in the slightest. This MAGNIFICENT Book is Yours—FREE. No Cash ACCEPTED FOR THIS BOOK. No strings to this offer. Your copy is all ready, waiting to be mailed to you. Send and get it now.

The Authors' Press, Dept. 227, Auburn, N. Y.  
Send me **ABSOLUTELY FREE** "The Wonder Book for Writers." This does not obligate me in any way.

Name.....  
Address.....  
City and State.....



## Home Study Business Courses

The urgent need of business today is for high-salaried executives, managers and departmental specialists. Under the LeSalle Problem Method you can get, in your spare time at home by mail, under expert guidance, training which parallels actual business practice. The University's staff of 1760 people includes 460 business authorities, educators and assistants ready at all times to give prompt counsel and advice to enrolled members on any business question or problem. This is a service not obtainable from any other educational institution.

Write your name and address at the bottom and mail today. We will send full information and book of remarkable records of advancement made by LeSalle trained men; also our interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One." Low cost and convenient monthly terms which anyone can afford. Money refunded if dissatisfied upon completion of course. More than 250,000 have enrolled. Find out what LeSalle training can do for you. Check and mail the coupon NOW.

**LESALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**  
The Largest Business Training Institution in the World  
Dept. 2369-R Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Send without obligation to me information regarding course indicated below, also copy of your interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One."

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accounting                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Finance     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching for C. P. A. & Institute Examinations | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Letter Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Spanish      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management—Foreign and Domestic        | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law—Degree of LL.B.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel and Employment Management            | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management Efficiency               |  |

Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....



## SAVAGERY

HERE'S a story that you will read with enthusiasm and remember with the keenest pleasure—"Savagery," a virile story of adventure in the North, by Hal G. Evarts. Along with twelve other absorbing novels and stories by Rupert Hughes, Courtney Ryley Cooper, Ben Ames Williams, Gerald Beaumont, Clarence Budington Kelland, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Katharine Newlin Burt and other noted writers, it appears in the January issue of —

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Now on Sale THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, Publishers, 36 So. State St., CHICAGO

IN THIS DAY AND AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity if you expect to make the most out of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible for your own self-satisfaction, which is alone well worth your efforts, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly. If not wholly, by your "look," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to see you looking otherwise; it will injure your welfare! Upon the impression you constantly make rests the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny? My new Nose-Shaper "TRADOS" (Model 24) corrects now ill-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently, is pleasant and does not interfere with one's occupation, being worn at night.

## YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL FACE BUT YOUR NOSE?



Before



After



Write today for free booklet, which tells you how to correct ill-shaped noses without cost if not satisfactory  
**M. TRILETY, Face Specialist** 1379 Ackerman Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y.



# ON CREDIT DIAMONDS WATCHES



**SEND for CATALOG**

## Special Bargains

**DIAMONDS WIN HEARTS**  
Diamond Engagement Rings; Wedding Rings, plain and Diamond-Set

Also a splendid assortment of the new engraved, pierced Rings, White and Green Solid Gold, fine brilliant Diamonds; Diamond La Vallieres, Bar Pins, Ear Screws, Scarf Pins, Cuff Links, Watches, Wrist Watches, etc. Send today for Catalog and make your selections.

**We pay all shipping charges.**

**CREDIT TERMS** on purchases of \$5 or over, one-fifth down, balance in eight equal amounts, payable monthly.

**LIBERTY BONDS ACCEPTED**

# LOFTIS

**BROS & CO. ESTD 1863**

**THE NATIONAL CREDIT JEWELERS**  
Dept. K-185, 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Ill.  
STORES IN LEADING CITIES



## Don't Wear a Truss



**BROOKS' APPLIANCE**, the modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads. Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap. **Sent on trial to prove it.** Protected by U. S. patents. Catalogue and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.

C. E. BROOKS, 111D. State Street, Marshall, Mich.

## SPOTLIGHT of ECONOMY



**Double Tread Tires are the absolute limit in Tire Bargains.**

No values like them anywhere, and the most liberal terms. Pay Only After You Have Inspected Them. Standard make tires re-constructed in our own factory by experts, to give 6000 miles or more service. And FREE a Standard make inner tube and teller with each tire ordered.

**SEE THESE REDUCED PRICES**

Prices Include Tubes and Tires		
30x3	\$ 6.90	34x4 \$11.10
30x3 1/2	7.95	34x4 1/2 12.25
32x3 1/2	8.75	35x4 1/2 12.75
31x4	9.85	36x4 1/2 13.25
32x4	10.35	35x5 14.00
33x4	10.80	37x5 14.25

State size wanted, S.S. or C.I. Non-Skid or Plain Tread. Send \$2.00 deposit with each tire ordered, balance C.O.D. Subject to examination. 5 per cent discount if full amount is sent with order. Supply limited. Order NOW

**CLIFTON TIRE CO.** Dept. 293, 3536 Ogden Ave. CHICAGO, ILL.



## A Big Raise in Salary

Is Very Easy to Get, if You Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

### Remember When You Were a Kid

and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

### We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to success and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you get it. Write or print your name on the coupon and send it in today.

**American School of Correspondence**  
Dept. G-2110 Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

**American School of Correspondence,**  
Dept. G-2110 Chicago, Ill.

I want job checked—tell me how to get it.

.....Architect.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Lawyer.	\$5,000 to \$15,000
.....Building Contractor.	\$5,000 to \$10,000	.....Mechanical Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000
.....Automobile Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....Shop Superintendent.	\$3,000 to \$7,000
.....Automobile Repairman.	\$2,500 to \$4,000	.....Employment Manager.	\$1,000 to \$10,000
.....Civil Engineer.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Steam Engineer.	\$2,000 to \$4,000
.....Structural Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....Foreman's Course.	\$2,000 to \$4,000
.....Business Manager.	\$5,000 to \$15,000	.....Photoplay Writer.	\$2,000 to \$10,000
.....Certified Public Accountant.	\$7,000 to \$15,000	.....Sanitary Engineer.	\$2,000 to \$5,000
.....Accountant and Auditor.	\$2,500 to \$7,000	.....Telephone Engineer.	\$2,500 to \$5,000
.....Draftsman and Designer.	\$2,500 to \$4,000	.....Telegraph Engineer.	\$2,500 to \$5,000
.....Electrical Engineer.	\$4,000 to \$10,000	.....High School Graduate.	In two years.
.....General Education.	In one year.	.....Fire Insurance Expert.	\$3,000 to \$10,000

Name..... Address.....

# Life's Great Adventure



**L**IFE'S great adventure is the engrossing theme of BLUE BOOK fiction. Dramatic episodes, hazardous crises, daring exploits, fascinating mysteries, romantic encounters, joyous comedies—life is rich in material which our clever American writers turn into the vital and interest-riveting stories for the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. The next, the March, issue, for example, will be specially noteworthy; for it will include —

**“Voodoo”**

**By William Almon Wolff**

A captivating novelette of the American occupation in Haiti.

**“In the Days of His Youth”**

**By Frederick R. Bechdolt**

The old West never provided a more attractive story than this.

**“The Sword of Justice”**

**By Lemuel L. De Bra**

**“Number 201 for Luck”**

**By William Harper Dean**

**“Deep Water Men”**

**By Culpeper Zandt**

“Free Lances in Diplomacy,” by Clarence Herbert New, “Wind along the Waste,” by Gladys Johnson, and many other fine stories by such writers as Robert J. Casey, Marshall Scull, F. Morton Howard, George Allan England and Paul Fitzgerald—all in the forthcoming March issue of —

## The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The Story-Press Corporation, Publisher, 36 So. State Street, Chicago



# Swear Off Tobacco

## Tobacco Habit Banished Let Us Help You

### Quick Results

Trying to quit the tobacco habit unaided is often a losing fight against heavy odds, and may mean a serious shock to your nervous system. So don't try it! Make the tobacco habit quit you. It will quit you if you will just take **Tobacco Redeemer** according to directions.

It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 50 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. Your tobacco craving will usually begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

**Tobacco Redeemer** contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is marvelously quick, scientific and thoroughly reliable.

### Not a Substitute

**Tobacco Redeemer** is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It helps to quiet the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

### Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

### Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you are a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our free booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

**Newell Pharmacal Company**  
Dept. 308 St. Louis, Mo.

### Free Book Coupon

**NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.,**

Dept. 308

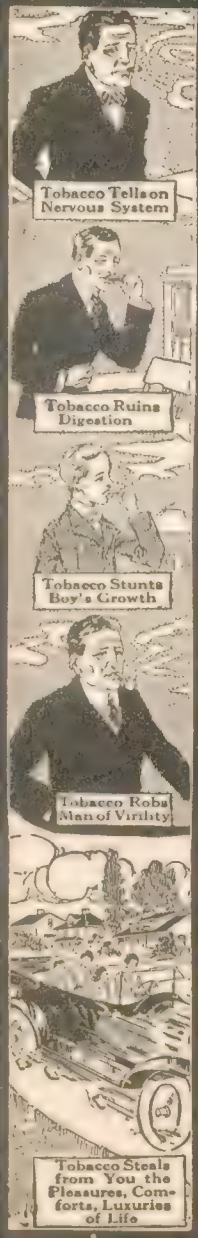
St. Louis, Mo.

Please send, without obligating me in any way your free booklet regarding the tobacco habit and proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will positively free me from the tobacco habit or my money will be refunded.

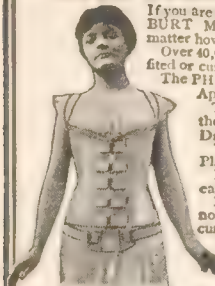
Name.....

Street and No.....

Town..... State.....



## CROOKED SPINES STRAIGHTENED



If you are suffering from any kind of Spinal Trouble, there is hope for you in the PHILLO BURT METHOD. No matter how old you are or what caused your affliction. No matter how many years you have suffered or how hopeless you consider your case to be. Over 40,000 cases, comprising every known form and condition of spinal trouble, benefited or cured in our experience of more than 20 years.

The PHILO BURT METHOD consists of a firm but comfortable, supporting corset Appliance together with a course of special spinal exercises.

The PHILO BURT APPLIANCE is made to measurements and to meet the requirements of each individual case. We will send it to you on a Thirty Day Trial. Your money refunded if it proves unsatisfactory.

This Appliance successfully replaces the old-style Braces and Jackets of Plaster, Steel, Leather and all unyielding, rigid apparatus.

It is worn like an ordinary Corset, is flexible and comfortable and gives an easy, natural support to the weakened or deformed spine.

For MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN; the PHILO BURT APPLIANCE not only relieves and strengthens but has accomplished many remarkable cures. WE WILL SEND YOU SWORN-TO PROOF.

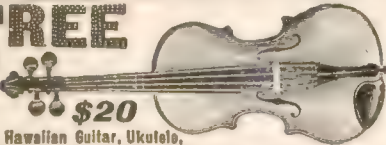
Write at once our helpful book on Spinal Troubles, Sent Free.

Describe your case, or have your Doctor do so, and we can give you more definite information.

PHILO BURT MFG. CO., 246-2 Odd Fellows' Temple, JAMESTOWN, N. Y.



**FREE**  
\$20



Violin, Hawaiian Guitar, Ukulele,  
Guitar, Mandolin, Cornet, Tenor Banjo or Banjo

Wonderful new system of teaching note music by mail. To first pupils in each locality, we give a \$20 superb Violin, Mandolin, Ukulele, Guitar, Hawaiian Guitar, Cornet, Tenor Banjo or Banjo absolutely free. Very small charge for lessons only. We guarantee success or no charge. Complete outfit free. Write now. No obligation. SLINGERLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Inc. Dept. 606 CHICAGO, ILL.



**FREE To Wear 10 Days**

Let us send you a wonderful sparkling Brillite Stone without one penny in advance. All the fire and brilliance of a perfect diamond. Beautiful hand made and engraved solid gold setting, plush case.

**Money Back if You Can Tell a Brillite from a Genuine Diamond.** Your choice of rings shown or scarf pin. State ring number. (For ring size send strip of paper long enough to meet over second joint of ring finger.) Upon arrival, deposit only \$4.75 with postman. We guarantee to refund your money in 10 days if you want it. Otherwise send only \$2.75 a month for 5 months. Send no money. Just write TODAY.

BRILLITE DIAMONDS, 5 S. Wabash Ave., Dept. 202, Chicago



## Good-bye to Gray Hair!

Here's the way to stop it

This way is easy, quick and sure, and it works a transformation. You simply comb a clear, colorless liquid through your hair—in from 4 to 8 days the gray disappears and the natural color returns. This colorless liquid is the triumph of modern science, which has produced a true restorer.

**Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer**

We prove the truth of these statements with a trial bottle, sent free if you fill out and mail in the coupon. Full directions and a special application comb come with it. Try it on a single lock—then get a full sized bottle from your druggist or direct from us. Don't accept imitations.

Mary T. Goldman, 161 Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

Please send me your FREE trial bottle of Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer with Special Comb. I am not obligated in any way by accepting this free offer.

The natural color of my hair is  
black..... jet black..... dark brown.....

medium brown..... light brown.....

Name..... Street.....

Town..... Co..... State.....

**\$1,600 to \$2,300  
a Year**

**Men — Women — Over 17 —  
should write at once**

Rapid advancement to higher Government Positions. "No lay-offs" because of STRIKES, WARS, FINANCIAL FLURRIES or the WHIMS of SOME PETTY BOSS. THE POSITION IS YOURS FOR LIFE.

Country residents and city residents stand the same chance for immediate appointment. Common-sense education sufficient. Political influence NOT REQUIRED.

Write immediately for schedule showing the places and dates of ALL WINTER and SPRING Government examinations. Don't delay. Every day you lose means the loss of just so much coaching before the rapidly approaching examinations.

**FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. F191, Rochester, N. Y.**

## WANTED!



RAILWAY



MAIL CLERKS

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE (The Pathway to Plenty), Dept. F191, Rochester, N. Y.

This coupon, filled out as directed, entitles the sender to free specimen questions; a free copy of our book, "Government Positions and How to Obtain Them"; a list of Government positions now open, and to consideration for Free Coaching for the examination here checked.

### COUPON

.... Railway Mail Clerk (\$1600 to \$2300) .... Customs Positions (\$1100 to \$2000)  
.... Bookkeeper (\$1400 to \$1800) .... Stenographer (\$1100 to \$2000)  
.... Postoffice Clerk (\$1400 to \$1800) .... File Clerk (\$1340 to \$1640)  
.... Postoffice Carrier (\$1400 to \$1800) .... Clerk in the Departments  
.... Rural Mail Carrier (\$ 720 to \$2600) at Washington (\$1200 to \$1800)

Name..... Address.....

Use this before you lose it. Write plainly.





## A new dental era

Dental science has now found ways to combat that film. The methods have been amply proved by years of careful tests. Now millions employ them. Leading dentists everywhere advise them.

The methods are combined in a dentifrice called Pepsodent. And, to let all know how much it means, a ten-day tube is being sent to all who ask.

## Five desired effects

Pepsodent brings five desired effects. It combats the teeth's great enemies as nothing has done before.

One ingredient is pepsin. Another multiplies the starch digestant in the saliva, to digest starch deposits that cling. The saliva's alkalinity is multiplied also. That to neutralize the acids which cause tooth decay.

Two factors directly attack the film. One of them keeps teeth so highly polished that film cannot easily adhere. Every application repeats these results.

Send the coupon for the 10-Day Tube. Note how clean the teeth feel after using. Mark the absence of the viscous film. See how teeth whiten as the film-coat disappears.

What you see and feel will be a revelation, and the book we send will explain how each effect is natural and necessary. It is important that you know this. Cut out the coupon now.

# You Can't Escape

## Tooth troubles if you leave a film

You should try this new method of teeth cleaning. Try it ten days without cost. It combats the film which dims the teeth and causes most tooth troubles. See and feel the results. To millions they are bringing cleaner, safer, whiter teeth.

### The tooth wrecker

Film is a great tooth wrecker. A viscous film clings to the teeth, enters crevices and stays. The ordinary tooth paste does not

end it. Old ways of brushing leave much of it intact. And very few people have escaped the troubles which it causes.

It is the film-coat that discolors, not the teeth. Film is the basis of tartar. It holds food substance which ferments and forms acid. It holds the acid in contact with the teeth to cause decay.

Millions of germs breed in it. They, with tartar, are the chief cause of pyorrhea—a disease now alarmingly common.

## 10-Day Tube Free

540

THE PEPSODENT COMPANY,  
Dept. 344, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.  
Mail 10-Day Tube of Pepsodent to

Only one tube to a family.

PAT. OFF.  
**Pepsodent**  
REG. U.S.

### The New-Day Dentifrice

A scientific film combatant combined with two other modern requisites. Now advised by leading dentists everywhere and supplied by all druggists in large tubes.



# E. Phillips Oppenheim

is probably more widely read by American men than any other novelist writing in the English language today.

## His Great New Novels

may be read first and exclusively in  
but one American publication

## The Green Book Magazine

His newest novel, which will not appear in book form for a long time, is now being exclusively published in The Green Book Magazine. Its title is—

## “NOBODY’S MAN”

You can begin it today in the January number of the magazine that thousands of people are turning to as the newest idea in periodicals in the world today. Get the January number, now on sale, of

## THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE

The Story-Press Corporation, Publishers, 36 So. State Street, Chicago



THEY CALLED HIM  
“UNITED STATES SMITH”

They wouldn't let him fight with a gun, for he was away up in Alaska when the war broke out and there wasn't time to move him before the Armistice.

HE SIMPLY HAD TO FIGHT

All they left him was his “mitts,” and he was there with them. He started it under the Aurora Borealis; and later when the European champion came looking for trouble, old United States Smith allowed he needn't look any further.

YOU'LL NEVER FORGET HIS STORY

AS IT APPEARS IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF  
THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Now on sale where magazines are sold and where it is being bought by increasing thousands of American men and women each month. The January issue supplies the reason for it. Get your copy today and start the new year right!

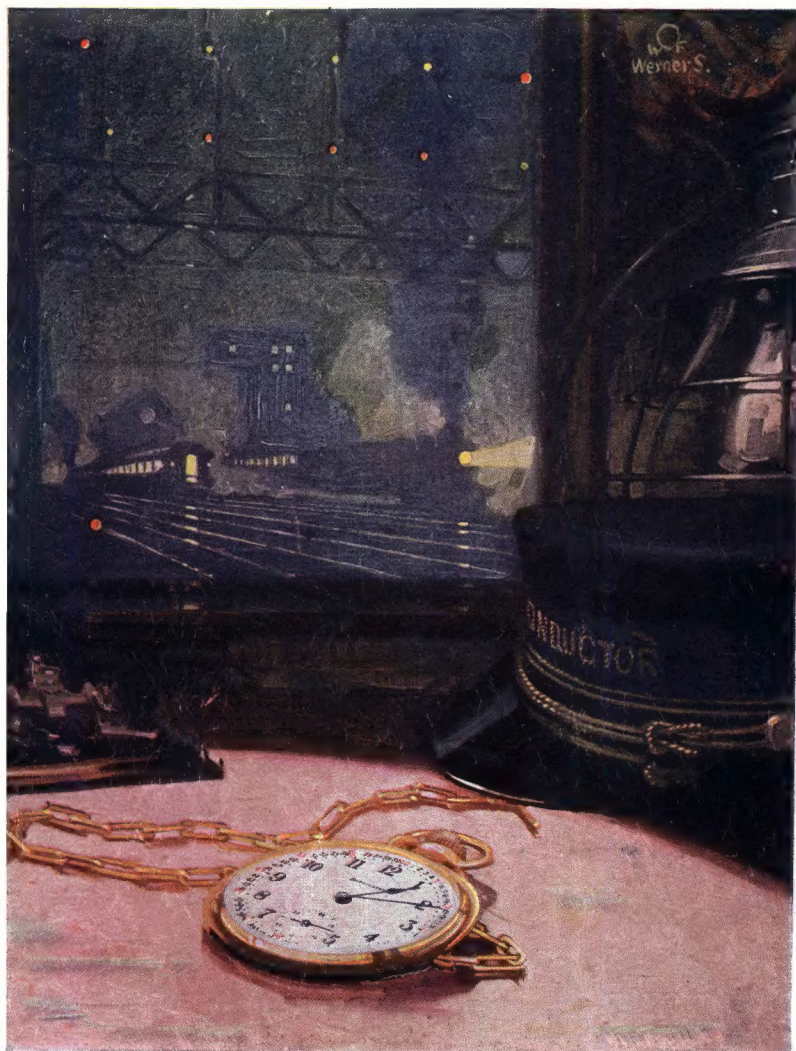
THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

*Now on Sale*

*FOR JANUARY*

*Price 25 Cents*





# The Burlington Twenty One Jewels

*"Fewer Jewels Not Worthy of the Name Burlington"*

Adjusted to the Second—Adjusted to Temperature—Adjusted to Isochronism—Adjusted to Positions  
25-Year Gold Strata Case—Genuine Montgomery Railroad Dial—New Art Designs—Extra Thin Cases

Burlington Watch Co.  
Dept. 1212 19th & Marshall Blvd., Chicago  
323 Fortage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Please send me (without obligation and pre-paid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your cash or \$5.00 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name.....

Address.....

## \$5<sup>00</sup> a Month

You pay only this small amount each month for this masterpiece, sold to you at the direct rock-bottom price, the lowest price at which a Burlington is sold. This masterpiece of watch manufacture is adjusted to position, adjusted to temperature, and adjusted to isochronism. Send coupon today for free book on watches.

**Send the Coupon** You do not pay a cent until you see the watch. Send the coupon today for this great book on watches, and full information of the \$5.00 a month offer on the Burlington Watch. Don't delay. **ACT TODAY. RIGHT NOW!**